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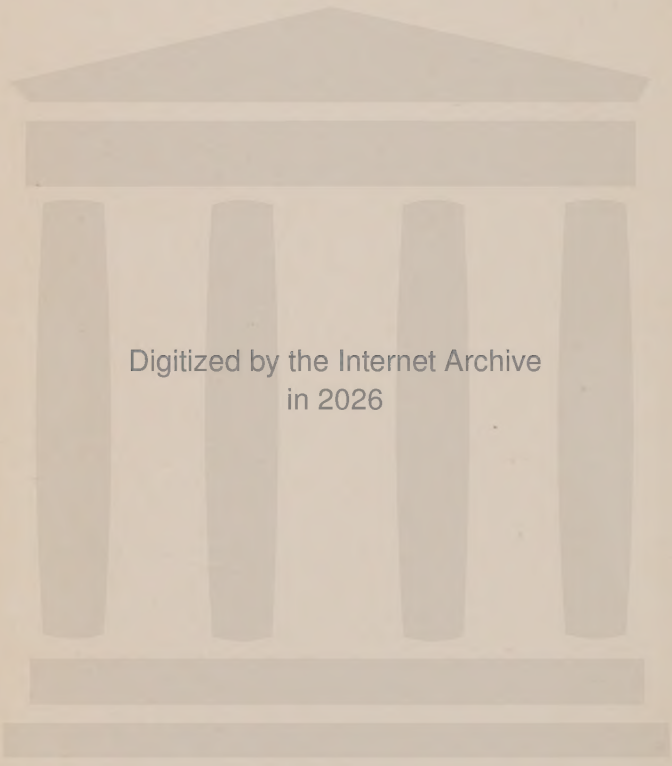
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THE AMERICAN DRAMATIST

By Montrose J. Moses

Representative British Dramas
Representative Continental Dramas
Representative American Dramas
Representative Continental One-Act Plays
Henrik Ibsen: The Man and His Plays
A Treasury of Plays for Children
The American Dramatist

By M. J. Moses and V. Gerson

Clyde Fitch and His Letters

Collection Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

GEORGE HANDEL HILL ("YANKEE" HILL) AS *Hiram Dodge*, IN "THE YANKEE PEDLAR; OR, OLD TIMES IN VIRGINIA."

Hill regaled London audiences with this play during November, 1836, and they recognized in this "Down-Easter" "a counterpart of our 'Canny Yorkshire lad.'"

See page 99

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THE AMERICAN DRAMATIST

BY

MONTROSE J. MOSES

ILLUSTRATED

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1925

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To

THE MEMORY OF

THREE AMERICAN DRAMATISTS

BRONSON HOWARD

JAMES A. HERNE

CLYDE FITCH

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PREFACE

The American Drama is a fact; it has a body, whatever the value of its spirit. In its local sense, it is a reflection of local conditions and type characteristics. In its technical sense, it exhibits special mannerisms, and shows itself following prescribed theatrical fashions. The American Dramatist has evolved from a definite social background, and his product — the American Drama — has been shaped partly by that, and has been limited by the economics that have preponderately governed the American Theatre.

There are recognizable causes to be found for every literary activity. If at one time the American stage was filled with cartoon types of native hue, it was because some excellence of acting made them the accepted fashion; if society drama was modelled on a French pattern, it was because American managers were encouraging French plays, importing them cheaply and adapting them wholesale; if a certain school of playwrights wrote with a robust technique, it was because the personality of Edwin Forrest was resonant and animal; if Bronson Howard was hailed joyously as the Dean of American Drama, he must have successfully stemmed a current that opposed him.

In 1911, I wrote a book which I called "The American Dramatist." Until then, no one had ever treated the subject in the compass of a single volume. The survey was designed to show that there was an ample field of play writing thus far neglected by the literary historian. A conventional belief had grown up that no such thing as an American Drama existed. Excepting a few articles and a few slim bibliograph-

ical lists, the records had heretofore remained scattered and unexamined.

Since then the situation has changed completely. In every quarter — touching every phase of theatre activity — the field has been opened up by research. Libraries and individuals have gathered a majority of the early plays, rare in their first editions, sere and yellow in their leaves. Dramas, never before published, have been brought to light, until now there are but few gaps left in this field of study. Without difficulty the student may recreate the whole life of the American Theatre.

In 1917, I revised "The American Dramatist." New activities of an interesting kind were making themselves felt; new men were breaking away from set conventions and breaking out into new channels; the competitive cinema was disrupting certain quarters of the theatre and turning the thoughts of our novelists and dramatists and actors toward the screen; artists were championing the scenic theories of foreign stage directors; little theatres were "mothering" young hopefuls like Dunsany and Eugene O'Neill. A "revolution" in the theatre had begun.

The War halted everything for a time. But there was to be no slumping back into old theatre conditions when activity was resumed. The "revolution" had come to stay; the methods of the old manager were doomed; the actor, the scenic artist, the director, took on new meaning. The dramatist became experimental in form. A new American Theatre was evident.

Rather than revise my book a second time, I determined to recast it entirely: to take advantage of all the changes I had witnessed, all the materials I had in a way helped to unearth. Thus I began to write the book anew in the light of enriched sources. When I first started my studies in American Drama, A. M. Palmer, Bronson Howard, and Clyde Fitch were alive. From them I received kindly encouragement and friendly aid. To many collections, now scattered, I was given generous access. The consequence is, "The American Dramatist" of 1911 contains data not procurable

elsewhere. I have taken advantage of such material in the present volume, adding thereto what will round out the work of men who were then alive. In every way the subject of American Drama is here viewed from the standpoint of the most authentic data.

With all the unearthing of sources, however, it may well be asked: Has the result been worth the labor? Governor Robert Hunter wrote his "Androboros" in 1714. Actually, play writing in America antedated the first regular theatre by several years. But for our purposes, we may consider our drama history to cover about two hundred years. During that time no overshadowing genius has caught the enthusiasm of the literary critic. The student is therefore confronted by a long series of plays, variable in their quality, oftentimes monstrous in their plot and sentiment, uninspired in their conscious imitation of accepted models. One has to read a long way before one recognizes here a bit of worthy dialogue, there a flash of creative characterization. From a strictly literary standpoint, the early American Drama is a meagre body. If it has color and warmth — which it occasionally has, in type — the infusion of such life is largely due to the creative force of some actor, like Forrest, or Dan Marble, or "Yankee" Hill, or James H. Hackett, poured into the mechanical mould. It is not necessary for anyone interested in knowing the character and extent of early play writing in America to go through the entire mass of material which the meticulous student goes through with fervor. There are plays that typify certain tendencies, certain tastes, certain methods; and these suffice to mark the chief stages of progression in American Drama. There may be variable qualities in the Stage Yankee from play to play, differing ways of expressing Republican sentiments in the host of early romantic and historical plays. Social customs may differ in the list of dramas whose themes are similar to "Fashion." But one play may be sufficiently representative of its class, to satisfy our need.

My intention in the following pages, therefore, is to emphasize only those plays most distinctive of their kind: and

to leave for lists the mention of further titles which have merely an academic value. I shall use plays as illustrating what the dramatist was attempting to do in his effort to create a native drama. In this connection it will be necessary as well to indicate what forces, habits, or customs made him do the obvious, the imitative thing, instead of striking out anew. The study of early American Drama is more valuable from its social side than from its literary angle. The demands of the actor are to be found in it; it is to be seen reacted upon by local and national event; it is journalistic in its realism. Looked at as a theatre commodity — which in the main it was — our early American Drama exploited whatever excellence it had for theatre effect. Sometimes the plays were written with no idea of production; thus they smacked of the mustiness of the closet, — yet even then had no tang of literary flavor. Catching at the rhythms of the Elizabethans, mustering the sonorous names of Greek mythology, and invoking the heroes of Plutarch — showing thereby the influence of an "old stock" culture — these writers of dialogue wrote "effusions" rather than plays.

The mediocrity of much of this material was early recognized; I shall show later that it was not accepted by the contemporary critics without demur, that always there has been a plea for better drama, for the use of more native subjects. While there was always an effort to "boost" a native "infant industry", there has been no blind acceptance of American Drama merely because it was a native product. There may have been reasons for this poverty of expression, this monotony of invention. The American Dramatist has not failed, in his prefatory notes to his slim little printed volumes, to voice his case against a foreign market, and the lack of an adequate copyright law. His personal problems, therefore, and his intentions, have probably more value, and more meaning for us, than many of the plays that came from his pen. Such expressions as he has uttered in protest against conditions have been noted in the following pages. They are a part of social history.

The American Drama, in the modern sense, began with

Bronson Howard's stand in 1870. A period of fifty-five years has elapsed. In this time there have been carried over from the past types and traditions; there have been continued certain characteristics that have always been identified as strictly American: directness of motive, quickness of action, downrightness of purpose, an unsophisticated surprise at moral independence, a puritanical indirectness when dealing with emotion, a naïve identification of strength with bluster. In this respect the American Drama has never grown up. But newer elements have found their way to the American stage — a riper technique; a more serious intention of using the theatre as something other than a house of cards, a clearer notion of the need for ideas, a less slavish consideration of what the manager wants. Such progressions will be noted as they fall due.

Our drama has worked very closely with the theatre; our theatre has very persistently worked our dramatists. From Dunlap's day, the player has prompted the playwright, and the long period in the theatre, known as the "golden days of acting", encouraged a very poor product in dramatic authorship. It must have taken an exceptional creative ability on the part of Wignall to make popular such a bare outline of song and talk as one finds on reading Dunlap's "Darby's Return." This is only one instance of a common occurrence in the history of the American Theatre. There are constant evidences of eulogistic appraisals of American dramas as they appeared, but the judgments were based on the thing seen, not on the thing read. One often forgets the drama in the acting.

The dramatist is, therefore, to be considered in this book, not as an entity, but as part of a development. At times his personality warrants emphasis because he has seriously tried now and again to impress that personality on the theatre. Then it is that he justifies special consideration.

So, the general design of the present study is to emphasize the individual contributions to the idea of an American Drama, to summarize the identifying qualities of those dramatists who have anything of an individual position, to enumerate

those elements in the theatre that have served to check the original flow of native creativeness, thus limiting the dramatist's work.

When any new play comes, we ask ourselves: "Is this *the* American Drama?" We hail it for a while and then say, "No, it is not." Every new experiment that relieves us a while from the exactions and limitations of a commercial theatre, we welcome as *the* "solution" of our dramatic ills. All ages have faced the theatre in the same way: we pass from one set of menaces to another; we are continually advancing new remedies. The theatre, though always ill, is alive. And a study of American Drama shows this quality of aliveness.

During the many years I have worked on this subject, I have been brought in contact with those whose perspective has stretched far back into early American Drama while it was in the making. Some of our actor-families first begin with the starting of our national existence. From these older men I have had the record by word of mouth, and I have amplified it by the written document. Printed reminiscences go down through the decades in graphic recounting of personal experiences in opening up pioneer territory. Diaries and letters are to be had which make warm a story long dead. Plays that I have edited have invariably called from obscurity some relative of a dramatist, encouraged to draw from some chest a theatre document of value. Such incidents relieve the routine of research and are grateful to the worker. Access to private papers has led to pleasant and profitable hours of theatre talk. One likes to believe that some of this "first-handedness" has crept into this book. But so many bricks go into the making of a building that it is impossible to give full credit to all: I must be content with expressing my sincere appreciation of the constant help I have had from many. My bibliographies may mention them by name, but I wish here to take note of the kindly spirit of coöperation I have met in nearly every direction I have turned.

Diverse memories crowd in upon me as I bring to a close

a piece of work begun some years ago. Hours rich in the beauty of association are bound up in the study of the men and plays this book discusses. Much that is steadying to one who must deal with facts of history has been given me. This rewriting of "The American Dramatist" is but a reliving of those days which brought to me a hand that upheld and a faith that was unswerving. One cannot consider as a work of mere labor that which has about it so much one wants to remember and to relive.

MONTROSE J. MOSES

NEW YORK,
June, 1925.

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THE AMERICAN DRAMATIST

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THE AMERICAN DRAMATIST

CHAPTER ONE

The American Background

I

The American Theatre has passed through many phases, every one of which has had effect upon the playwright. But perhaps there has been no greater menace to his welfare and furtherance than the early lack of faith in him as an American, and the later commercial exploiting of him as a more or less successful workman. It has taken a long time for us to realize the significance of the American Theatre as a social institution, and we have championed the National Theatre idea in the vain hope that such would make visible to the people something which in reality should not be a building but a community feeling for the value of an art.

We have, for many decades, fought to free the theatre from the calculating touch of the mere speculator, and we have succeeded to an extent far beyond our expectation. We have won him over to a partial belief that a good thing pays, to a desire for artistic production, to an interest in, if not participation in, the Experimental Theatre. The education that has been done to train the public to a better understanding of the best that has been written and is being written for the stage can be measured in its effect by the increasing demand for the printed play, and for technical books on the art of the theatre.

The success of the Little Theatre movement in localities of the smallest range, once dominated by school and church performances of mediocre sort, has left an indelible mark upon citizens of all classes — those coming from the farms of Dakota, from the mountains of North Carolina, from the hills of Georgia, from the crowded thoroughfare of Grand Street, the unprepossessing stable on Macdougal Street in New York, and the wharf in Provincetown, Massachusetts. The civic consciousness is aware of the theatre as never before: school, college, church, legislature are keyed to the growth and far-reaching effectiveness of the theatre in America.

We are beginning now to know something of drama as an art, and of the theatre as a social institution. Our masques and pageants have indicated to us what the value of communal expression might be; the affiliation of the actor with labor (in the Equity) and his participation in the shaping of an art playhouse (in the Actors Theatre, New York) have proven that, under conditions of mutual faith in the power of the theatre, the highest artistic results are obtainable. In such atmosphere the American playwright will become other than he has been.

In every true movement of progress, the dramatist of worth has risen above condition, made use of what his age had to offer him, and has somehow, in the end, carried the torch beyond his generation. Ibsen was once at the outpost, a lonely beacon against social wreck; Hauptmann was once among the arch-symbolists and arch-realists; Stanislavsky was once the last word in realistic producing. But the drama always wants to be other than it is. Strindberg calls Ibsen old-fashioned; Hasenclever departs from Hauptmann; Meyerhold and Tiaroff differ with Stanislavsky. So it is that once Bronson Howard's "The Henrietta", then Moody's "The Great Divide", then Eugene O'Neill's "Beyond the Horizon", and now John Howard Lawson's "Processional" have, at various times, been the hopeful limits of the American playwright outside the conventional.

Changes come slowly. They must carry with them social, economic, æsthetic, and spiritual adjustments. An institution

must somewhere be attached, otherwise it might be blown away by experiment; audiences cannot be forced, they must be persuaded. For a long while the American theatre manager held fast to his type of drama that spelled success, until he was assured of a different demand. Hugo and "Hernani", Dumas and "La Dame aux Camélias", Zola and "Thérèse Raquin", Becque and "Les Corbeaux", Antoine and the experimental group were mileposts away from French classic theatre convention: they were not at first in the safety zone even of a subsidized theatre. The record of Shaw in Victorian England is no better — nor the fate of Ibsen or Maeterlinck or Tolstoy or Björnson in the hands of official censorship. Yet, in such fight, the theatre has always won, and in such opposition virility of purpose has come from the writer of conviction, who possessed a social conscience and a vision.

II

The American background, from the period of colonization, was English. It has been difficult for us, so far as a native drama is concerned, to escape that fact. With the spirit of the Cavalier, we transplanted the theatre of David Garrick to the bare, crude boards of Williamsburg, Va.; with the determination of the Roundhead we brought into New England austerity and a Puritan prejudice against player folk. Both these elements persisted. It was well for us that we had a theatre spirit which we could thus import; otherwise it might have been a long while before we would have had time to create one for ourselves. After all, we were Englishmen, and might have been Englishmen still had George III heeded the wisest of his Parliamentarians and the most level-headed of his colonists. But politically independent though we afterwards became, with a growing consciousness of our natural background and an increasing appreciation of our local peculiarities, we still produced English poets, English storytellers, essayists, and dramatists, with a grafting upon the stock of American ways and manners.

The first expressions of communal art came from the people. Greek drama developed from a national sentiment and from national religious custom. The modern stage — which, in a way, was the stage we imported from London — came into existence through a church necessity, and by way of a vulgar tongue and guild support. Institutionally, the art of representing life has always been called into use for social purposes. The old *vocero*, or tribal songs of grief, the dithyrambic chorus about the altar of Dionysus, the *tropes* of the church service, made appeal to the crowd: there were a social relation, a spiritual meaning. The whole art value of drama is at first determined by the extent of its hold on the crowd: the type of drama is often determined by that broad appeal.

But, while our society in America was largely of English flavor, and while, before the national period, it was constructed on class distinctions, the Republican principle did not give the theatre any definite outlet for creating a native drama of any individual social distinction, that it might call its own. Add to which, there must be taken into account that most of our actors and managers were in the English tradition. They brought us Shakespeare as he was played in London: they stepped from Drury Lane and Covent Garden to the boat that took them across seas. They found the Southern planter with an English Library full of Farquhar and Dryden, Addison and Steele; they heard of the New England divine preaching a sermon no different because of a different land.

Speaking of the "fixed" condition out of which the American Theatre evolved, a manager once bewailed the fact that musical comedy would always have to be imported from abroad because our democracy had deprived us of a picturesque peasantry. The vital theatre is always close to life, and is conscious of that life which is closest to it. While it may, in its greatest examples, transcend nationality, it is usually moved by a time spirit that recognizes its locality. Ibsen in Scandinavia, Hauptmann and Sudermann in Germany, Tolstoy in Russia, Shaw in England were swept by the same social movements. The Renaissance spirit was of similar

character wherever it manifested itself. Mediævalism sought much the same expression in the religious life of France, Germany, Italy, and elsewhere. Philosophical attitudes toward life, as they expressed themselves in art, knew no boundaries, though they carried with them variable external signs. In this country we were never part of such movements. We were born to take what others went through in travail. Even our national development was based on a sort of borrowed idealism, as shown in the wording of some of our public documents.

One cannot, therefore, expect our theatre to stand alone, and to grow instantly from the soil. It had a long and devious road to travel — a road of imitation, not of experiment. It was always based on models, until such time as a stand was taken for the recognition of drama as American — and even then it was difficult to persuade the manager of the wisdom of the declaration.

So, in the study of American Drama, one must constantly watch for the model used. Royall Tyler did not take long to write our first social comedy — "The Contrast" — after seeing a performance of "The School for Scandal." John Howard Payne and those who followed his pattern of romantic drama were not unfamiliar with the school of Sheridan Knowles. We have followed the English formula, and taken, by way of England, what Europe had to give. It was only the cheaper drama of France and Germany that came to us directly, hurried here for quick translation and adaptation. Even the present form of "Expressionism" is an imported product.

But the American playwright has come to learn, even in his imitation, something of the structure of plays; he has worked out for himself, in a hard school, the technique of the theatre, and he has found conflict at the basis of American life. Some of his drama has been moving, even if not logical; it has been vigorous, even if not always soundly motivated. He has often identified theatrical clash with life force, violent expression with deep emotion. But somehow his drama has articulated when played, even though it so often creaks when it is read.

He has exerted his efforts to write plays for the theatre. In doing so he has not tried to express himself but to copy others in accord with the style of acting prevalent. If, by chance, expression of personal faith or declaration of political conviction crept into his dialogue, he excused the intrusion! When the so-called social drama came upon us by way of Jones and Pinero and Shaw, he was still reticent about convincing an audience, that paid for admission, of the presence of social evil in a community. And it was only in flashes that character was truthfully treated in relation to actual condition: then it was done in reportorial fashion, not with full conviction. It is always necessary to keep drama close to life, — a drama which not only draws from life but in turn reacts upon it.

None of our dramatists in the past were intense, absorbed in their work. They wrote rapidly, they made compromises with their themes. If they wrote blank verse, their lines echoed others; they aimed often for sonority; they heard elocution, a pumping grandeur which characterized the old acting. They were not constant in their quality; and they were nearly always accidental in their choice of subject. This latter was as far away from Arizona as Ossian, and much more closely related to Ossian.

One has to realize all these negative points that militated against the quick development of a rich dramatic literature, to give true value to those positive excellences which mark the history of American Drama. We are nearest the native flavor when we discuss the use of the red man in Indian plays, the appearance of the Yankee in quasi-dialect comedies, the rise and fall of Negro minstrelsy, and the rural drama which rose to such excellent realism in the dramas of James A. Herne. We read W. D. Howells on Harrigan, and learn there was a Goldoni in our midst; we follow Brander Matthews and realize that in Weber and Fields we had our native Aristophanes. The exalted values we place upon our "lively arts" in the theatre are indication of how earnestly we have watched for and hoped for a drama that was worth while and representative.

The mere craftsmanship of the American play has improved

with the years. While we still manipulate the drama, we have gradually come to regard it as an organism not wholly at the caprice of the dramatist. There are too many in the audience nowadays who have read their Aristotle, Freytag, Price, Baker, and Archer, to be moved entirely by the "made" play. The deep and vital problems of human nature are being exalted above the mere effectiveness of situation. Social relations and their exact foundations are challenging us. We have to thank the foreign drama for this. It has taught us by example. Since the days when Fitch, Thomas, and Gillette dominated the Frohman stage, we have had no need to be ashamed of structure.

But we have not yet fully learned to meet life in our own way on the stage. We are still bringing the European mold and trying to make it fit American expression. Yet to-day, more than ever, we are conscious of our own quality; we are drawing from the soil. And there are indications that we are reaching for a form that is our own. There were constant evidences of realistic treatment of character in our early dramas. But they were not free to develop of themselves. We have to meet life in our own way and not have it met for us in the European way. We learned from social drama to look deep into the springs of action: through it we escaped a superficiality which was deadening. Social forces, spiritual forces lie deep; surface treatment passes them by. Hence, it is not cleverness but understanding that is required for their full and ample explanation.

III

What are the essentials of an American play? Do these essentials change with the added problems that face our nation from administration to administration, or are they factors deeply ingrained in our character? There is something fundamental in the distinction which makes Henry Arthur Jones British and Augustus Thomas American. Spiritual, mental, and social environments differ. Of course the

primary test of any play is its moving quality. But many American plays that have enthralled their own public have failed to appeal to London audiences, and *vice versa*. There are national distinctions, though the interference of nationality does not make for the most universal drama.

A dramatist's point of view is shaped by the body politic in which he lives; no matter if he is a critic of his time, he is none the less of it: its very irritations have served to shape him. In the human sense, the essentials of an American play should reflect the essential basis of American life. "A play written in English" does not define it, for that is the language used by Masefield, Galsworthy, and Shaw. "A play written in Americanese" only partly applies to it, for still it would be English reduced to American dialect, as Yorkshire, Devonshire, and Celtic variations are a dialect. "Plays written on American themes" is not a sufficient mark of identification, for then John Drinkwater, with his "Lincoln" and "Lee", would be an American dramatist. Some years ago, Bronson Howard wrote to me: "By the term I should mean any play that is written by an American, or in America by a foreign resident, that is produced here, and that deals with any subject — using America in the sense of the United States. The phrase, American Drama, if extended to a full description, would be 'Plays written in the United States, chiefly in the English language.'"

There are too many holes in such a definition to discuss it seriously. "Locality makes the American drama," Hamlin Garland once asserted, and Augustus Thomas' opinion was that American themes written by Americans would sufficiently cover the meaning. But, underlying these various efforts to identify distinguishing native marks, these dramatists of the period of Howard were reticent about defining too sharply what they meant by American Drama; as a playwright Howard had to be careful about his Americanisms; as a man he was sufficiently acute in intellect to see candidly wherein our American characteristics were a limitation rather than an asset in the development of a national drama. So, these men of the theatre always ended their discussions

of the cant phrase "American Drama" by saying truthfully that "humanity is universal, whether garbed in a cowpuncher's outfit or a king's uniform." Thomas, in trying to stretch the boundaries of the American Theatre, has asserted, "There are very few good lines in a play that go to waste, and with their general acceptance as good, there is little disposition to regard the nationality of the author. A good line by anybody secures immediate recognition by any audience of understanding." But the good line is a weakness of American Drama, rather than a strength; we have plenty of good lines, but not too many good plays.

So we must look deeper for the American Drama. "There is none," declared Harry B. Smith, the librettist, some years ago, "in the sense that there is a French drama or an English drama. Our plays are clever, run a season or two, and then are relegated to the top shelf. There will be no American Drama until plays are written that endure, and take their place in the body of literature." Certainly a survey of our two hundred years of play writing offers no such striking examples. We would sacrifice our whole native heritage in drama now for one Shakespeare, for one Molière, for one Sheridan. Inasmuch as we have no such single example, we content ourselves by watching the hesitant way in which the American Drama has felt for its native life. And it has felt for it in its own way, an unsophisticated way, a childish way — fearful lest its soul be seen, its hunger and inadequacy stand confessed — putting on a brave front — the front of extreme youthful mentality.

The early dramatists had a habit of introducing patriotic touches in distinctly foreign plays: the English censor was always on the lookout for Republican sentiments in the few American plays that were brought to London in the early days. The homespun commonplaceness of the downright honest Yankee was also as much a rubber-stamp convention as any stage Irishman of the period. The Yankee in Tom Taylor's "Our American Cousin" — an Englishman's conception — was not so different from *Solon Shingle*, or *Adam Trueman* in Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion."

American audiences have always wanted the square deal, have always wanted conventional virtue to conquer. The large heart rather than the subtle one, the direct deed rather than the evasive thought, the terse answer rather than the veiled meaning have always compelled sympathetic interest in an American crowd. Most of our dramatists have learned directness through newspaper work. Howard, Thomas, Ade, Hoyt began as reporters.

The quality of "uplift" has oftenest been associated with the word "American." The American dramatist has overdone, through external action, the belief in the indisputable right to rise above environment. Democracy, we have been taught, knows but one level — the equity of justice; it knows but one defeat, the confession of incompetence. There are no barriers drawn except those that separate success from non-success. The American is placed upon the highroad of life, and there comes to him the American slogan, "It's up to you." All means justify that end, and so in many of our plays our ethics become doubtful, our manners become vulgar. The American is very frank about the effect, the goal; he is very slack about his motives. Eager to claim his indisputable right to rise above environment, he is not as eager to rise above himself. We must accept him as he is, on a pinnacle. He has got there, however inadequate he be, however dense to what he sees or what his responsibilities are. The tragedy of George Kelly's "The Show-Off", of Rachel Crothers's "Expressing Willie" was not recognized.

"In defeat," writes some one, "the American sows the seed of victory; . . . for there is no event, not the worst, but God is of and in it. And for *Œdipus* in his remorse, and *Oswald* in his imbecility, there is infinite certainty of good. . . . Paradoxical as it is, the fact is clear that, in the heart of a Georgia mob, in Whitman's verse, and in the cowpuncher's respect for a woman, there lives the same spirit whose largeness and delicacy, whose tenderness and unconquerable daring, made American life the most vital in the world."

This nobility of attitude, this epic strength — which we have garbed in outward melodramatic color — have always

been active in our native drama. "All America is divided into two classes," wrote Owen Wister in "The Virginian", "the quality and the equality. The latter will always recognize the former when mistaken for it. Both will be with us until our women bear nothing but kings." Then he added his interpretation of a free democracy:

"It was through the Declaration of Independence," he said, "that we Americans acknowledged the eternal inequality of man, for we abolished a cut-and-dried aristocracy. We had seen little men artificially held up in high places, and great men artificially held down in low places, and our own justice-loving hearts abhorred this violence to human nature. Therefore we decreed that every man should thenceforth have equal liberty to find his own level. By this very decree we acknowledged and gave freedom to true aristocracy, saying, 'Let the best man win, whoever he is.' Let the best man win! That is America's word. That is true democracy."

This best man standard has been variously interpreted by the American dramatist; the tenableness of the theory held more consistently in the early plays than in the later, because right and wrong were more markedly defined. But the best man might be the one with swifter fists: we saw that in the 10-20-30 melodrama, we see it nightly in the moving-picture. It was not interpreted subtly.

Speaking of his hero and heroine in "The Gentleman from Indiana", Booth Tarkington said: "The genius of the American is adaptability, and both were sprung from pioneers whose mean life depended on that quality." In this acceptance of inherited environment is found the infinite source of action. Later on in this narrative, there runs through the hero's mind a definition of success: "To accept the worst that Fate can deal, and to wring courage from it instead of despair." This is one of the dominant characteristics in American life, and we have striven to accent it in our drama. Our characters are made optimistic, resilient, though they are not made to reason why.

Our dramatists have speeded up action so as not to explain it; they have moved audiences by sheer swiftness, by quick

grasp of striking moments, by bravado. "I'm a business man, Miss Dearborn," explained *Curtis Jadwin*, in Channing Pollock's dramatization of Frank Norris's "The Pit." "It doesn't take me long to discover what I want, and, when I find that thing, I generally get it. I want you to marry me." On the principle that to the swift belongs the race, such sentimental negotiation always thrills the American, who "wants what he wants when he wants it." *Jadwin*, the stage conception of the business speculator, utters defiance against any leisure-class subtlety or idleness. He exclaims, "Oh, it's not the money, Laura; it never was. It was the excitement. I had to do something. I couldn't sit around and twiddle my thumbs. I don't believe in lounging around clubs, or playing the race, or murdering game birds, or running some poor, helpless fox to death."

In such expressions of an active life, one often detected the American dramatist's reaction to the Continental importation. In the plays of the Boucicault-Howard period, if a character had to commit adultery or attempt it, the character must be French. To contemplate the wickedness of dissolute life, the character must be a *Quex* or a *Baron Chevrial*. The stage must not be made to reflect degradation; we were smug in our slogan, so tersely put by the Salvation Army: no matter how far down a man may be, he is never out.

In Richard Harding Davis's "Soldiers of Fortune", *Clay*, the hero, says to the society *Langham* girl, who has taunted him with the satisfaction he finds in labor:

"No, . . . I don't amount to much, but, my God! . . . when you think what I was. . . . If I wished it, I could drop this active work to-morrow, and continue as an adviser — as an expert — but I like the active part better. I like doing things myself. . . . It's better to bind a laurel to the plow than to call yourself hard names."

The tragedy of incompetence, so often hinted at in the American Drama, was not a deep-seeing one. If the heroes of the early American plays were sentimental, the heroes of the later plays were largely muscular. The man who could

swing from a rope into the midst of a mutinous crew was the hero of the crowd. This crowd knew nothing of the eternal man around whom the forces of destiny might be swirling, against which a strong arm was nothing, but a brave soul was everything.

IV

One might write a book on "The Ordeal of the American Drama", and slay the childish things with which we have been content to amuse ourselves. We have never seriously dealt with history, we have never dealt with politics, we have never honestly faced our business problems. Van Wyck Brooks shows, rather ruthlessly, but no less truthfully, that we have never unflinchingly faced our national failings, as he faced what he considers to be the failings of Mark Twain. Our dramatists have used no crucible, they have seen through no burning-glass. They have gilded their fairies, as in a "Midsummer Night's Dream." If Eugene O'Neill removes the ass's head, he is considered bold, unsavory. The social fervor of our playwrights has been tenuous, intermittent. Not any of it has changed to the slightest degree a wrong condition, as Galsworthy's "Justice" checked an English prison policy. We have splashed around in a rich sea of American humanity, making use of only the dynamic externals. We have been much more moved by the theories of dramatic technique than by theories of American ways, customs, and institutions. We have learned to do the "trick" by imitation. But being a trick, the American Drama only stands analysis in its articulation, not in its consistency of idea. The playwright knows how to turn novels into plays, how to dig plays from investigation reports and editorials. He has press-agented American life in fulsomeness, but his body of ideas has been "half-baked."

It is true, he faced many taboos — the American Dramatist of over a hundred years. And despite our battle against them, which gives us freedom now to discuss once muted questions, he is still reticent. If we are given frank talk in drama,

it is the foreigner writing, so the conservatives say, not the true American, the one hundred percenter.

Yet one cannot say that the book which exploits the hundred per cent. American unreservedly is the book that is now widest read. There has been an irony in American Drama for many years, that became stronger with the growth of realism in our literature. Charles Hoyt's farces, George Ade's "Fables in Slang", Mr. Dooley took some of the gilt from our wrongly placed patriotism. Paul Leicester Ford's "The True George Washington" showed how history might be humanized. Magazine "muck-raking" took something from the smugness of cities. All this paved the way for such pictures as Sinclair Lewis has given us in "Main Street" and "Arrowsmith", and as John Howard Lawson jazzed together in "Processional."

Now that the theatre "revolution" has opened a broader field for the American Drama, we may hope for a stronger treatment of American life on the stage. It was looked for, in the nineties, when Frank Norris gave us "The Octopus", James Lane Allen "The Reign of Law", and Ellen Glasgow "The Deliverance." Would an American dramatist give us a play with a similar touch of the soil, a similar fibre of American character, facing problems of inheritance, environment, and spiritual struggle? I suppose Moody's "The Great Divide" might be said to have answered the hope, though it is nearer relationship to "Davy Crockett." The New Englandisms of Octave Thanet, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Mary E. Wilkins-Freeman antedated a long while the genre dramas of "Trifles" by Susan Glaspell, "Beyond the Horizon" by Eugene O'Neill, and "Icebound" by Owen Davis. Herne's "Shore Acres" is a much nearer connection. The past history of the American Drama does not show the close interchange of playwright and writer. Of course we had dramatizations of Scott and Cooper and Dickens; the work of J. K. Paulding and Irving was utilized; "Uncle Tom's Cabin" became at once a tract and a drama and a novel. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the man of letters wrote plays, letters and drama in the history of the American Theatre have been a

A Typical American Background. Frank Mayo as *Davy Crockett.*

"O, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wide Border his steed was the best."

separate thing. If the American dramatist changes from imitator to originator of forms to hold native rhythms, it will be due to something that has happened to the theatre itself — which has freed him from box-office restrictions. What has he had to cope with, other than the mental limitations of the men who have controlled the theatre since the days of the Theatrical Trust? American life gave him the incentive for movement. People are trained for swiftness by the "movies." I know men who will read nothing but "swift" stories. From the American newspaper he saw the value of the scare-line, of underscoring. While at the height of his melodrama period, when Owen Davis was turning out such pieces as "Nellie, the Beautiful Cloak Model" and "Convict 999", he wrote, after studying his audiences intently, "I soon found that humanity was the keynote of their interest; that the elemental passions appealed to under a coating of sugar by the Broadway dramatist were the same as those aroused by the Third Avenue playwright without the coating. In all plays, whether given in the two-dollar houses, or in the less imposing ten-twenty-thirty-cent places of amusement, there must be at bottom some big, dominant, human emotion. On Broadway, you must hide the springs that move your puppets — and be subtle, moving toward your climax circuitously."

How carefully these men were trained to avoid the very substance from which great drama comes, how very unobservant they were in their examination of the springs of human motive, how very distrustful of — not to say ignorant of — a logical progressiveness to their stories. Even such sensitive workers as Moody failed to see how easily, through external effectiveness, their inner reason might be thrown askew. "The Great Divide" crumbles before a few very direct questions.

When Ibsen and, later, Shaw, were uttering what the press called "disagreeable truths", the optimistic professional American shuddered. "Give us no half-lights," he gasped; mellow light that soothes the mind was his specialty. "I cannot see," Charles Klein once said to me, "how Bernard

Shaw, who denies everything from pure love to pure music, can be a public benefactor; only the man who affirms what is good tells the whole truth." Mr. Herne, our first realist in the theatre, was more far-seeing. "If a disagreeable truth is not also an essential," he wrote, "it should never be used in art." The difference between these two statements shows that great barrier which separated the playwright of expediency from the dramatist who possessed sincerity and had an impulse to get at the truth of things.

According to Langdon Mitchell, the "plain" American is nothing more than the unfinished, half-baked man, and we should not be proud of him. He has diagnosed "The American Malady", and I read into it "The Malady of the American Dramatist." He sees nowhere intellectual interest, he sees everywhere the vulgarity of a nomadic people in Ford cars. He looks for ideals, noble behavior, intellectual enjoyments, the pleasure of art, the simple life of Horace, and he finds America headed neither for an Athenian Culture nor for a "thrice-hammered hardihood of Rome." What he does see is a false conception of what makes life good, an empty valuation of leisure, a forgetfulness of robustness and adventure out of which is ever born a rich popular culture. Remembering that, he writes:

"These United States are a man's country. The wilderness is not so far away; it invites and can be enjoyed without paying a ransom. If you are weary of the college campus, or of the suburban felicities, or of what Philadelphians call the 'Main Line', you take the train to New Brunswick, or the Navajo Reservation, and refresh yourself with hardship and the simple life. To sum up my patriotism, I believe that I like American life for many of the same reasons for which the sailor likes what he calls dirty weather: there is, in our state of affairs, something chaotic and adverse which calls for action and provokes high spirits."

It is not so very difficult for the discerning American to accept Mr. Mitchell's criticisms of the crowds, whether young or old, as rather disdainful of the arts and sciences, well-intentioned and empty-headed at twenty-five and fifty.

"We look in the magic glass," writes Mr. Mitchell, "and the glass is truly magic with the grace and truth of genius, and we see our American brother's face. It is a very sad face, but not sad with thought; not furrowed by dark experience; not weary with having lived. No, the face, as it appears on this canvas, wears the mournful, baffled expression of a soul which does not know how to live, and has not lived."

Strange, writes George Santayana, in his "Character and Opinion in the United States", that America with its vigor, goodness, hope, should not be able to breed "clean thinking, honest judgment, and rational happiness." Not so strange, writes Professor James Harvey Robinson, in "The Mind in the Making", when we consider that

"One awful thing that the Book of the Past makes plain is that with our animal heritage we are singularly oblivious to the large concerns of life. We are keenly sensitive to little discomforts, minor irritations, wounded vanity and various danger signals; but our comprehension is inherently vague and listless when it comes to grasping intricate situations and establishing anything like a fair perspective in life's problems and possibilities. Our imagination is restrained by our own timidity, constantly reinforced by the warnings of our fellows, who are always urging us to be safe and sane, by which they mean convenient for them, predictable in our conduct and graciously amenable to the prevailing standards."

A study of American Drama will show this to have been our dominant ill. The playwright has not had authority in the theatre, he has not demanded anything of the theatre. He has served the theatre painstakingly. A view of more recent manifestations will show that those ills are slowly being removed from us. Such plays as "Dulcy", "Beggar on Horseback", "Processional", "The Adding Machine", "The Hairy Ape", measure an impulse in American Drama away from those falsities of the "heroic" which once held American audiences as moving and truthful.

CHAPTER TWO

Our Colonial Theatre

I

Scholarship has brought to light many interesting details regarding the commencement of the American Theatre. Thomas Godfrey's "The Prince of Parthia" was the first play by an American to be presented on the professional stage, in 1767. The demands of the colonial theatre cannot be said to have done much either to foster or to hasten the playwright. It was too busy establishing itself. America had long before figured in the drama through mention by Chapman, Jonson, and Marston in "Eastward Hoe!" (1605); Shakespeare's "Tempest" had spoken of "the still-vex'd Bermooths"; the voice of a reverend had spoken ill of actors in Virginia as early as 1609. Paul L. Ford states that in a masque given at Whitehall, February 15, 1612, some actors, lately returned from America, and wearing Indian dress, appeared. And in "The Widow Ranter; or, Bacon in Virginia", Mrs. Aphra Behn dealt with an American subject, while, in her novel, "Oroonoko" (1696), she showed her concern for slavery. History recounts that while in America, Sir William Berkeley, Governor of Virginia, wrote a play, "The Lost Lady" (1641), which greatly antedates the other royal governor, of New York, who wrote "Androboros" (1714). These beginnings are conflicting and not even yet satisfactorily cleared. One authority states that the first dramatic performance given on American soil was in French, at Port Royal, Acadia — a masque written

by Marc Lescarbot, on the return of Sieur de Poutrincourt. One might stretch the point and speak of the musicians and jugglers who set forth across the peninsula of Yucatan, in 1524, with Cortès; or look into the constitution of the "Ordre de Bon Temps", with which Champlain kept up the spirit of his colony in the winter of 1606–1607 — when other masques or entertainments than that by Lescarbot might be found.[1] In Quebec, during 1694, the Church frowned upon an amateur performance of "Tartuffe", which is prior to Professor Tyler's mention of a student recital of a "pastoral colloquy" before the Governor, at Williams and Mary College, in 1702. Jamestown, according to Bruce, was not stranger to plays, and the old fathers of Massachusetts, in 1685, were scandalized by the setting up of a dancing-master's "show" on lecture days, with the brazen assertion that "by one play he could teach more divinity than Mr. Willard or the Old Testament."

The theatre historian has to correct the incomplete assertions of Dunlap, Ireland, Seilhamer, and others regarding the priority of theatre buildings in America. The records of theatricals in Jamaica have yet to be traced before this can be done, for Kingston was a port *via* which players came from London to the colonies. Anthony Aston declares he himself arrived in Charles-Town, 1703, to give performances; faced by worry, he, "a gentleman, lawyer, poet, actor, soldier", etc., etc., "full of shame, poverty, nakedness, and hunger — turned 'Player and Poet', and wrote one play on the subject of the country."

The latest claimant to establishing the first theatre in America is Eola Willis, who writes, in "The Charleston Stage": "As a matter of fact, Charles-Town had a permanent theatre *fifteen years* before the opening of the Nassau Street Theatre in New York, *thirty-odd years* before the erection of the Southwark in Philadelphia, and almost *forty years* previous to the building of what Seilhamer thought to be the first theatre in this town."

[1] See mention of "Les Muses de la Nouvelle-France", Paris, 1609. In this is found, "Le Théâtre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France." Consult my "Representative Plays", i, 5.

In the popular mind, the American theatre begins with the name Hallam, the place Williamsburg, Va., the time 1752. But the Murray-Kean ventures were ahead of it in America, playing in New York at the theatre in Nassau Street, March 5, 1750; and Hallam's advance agent to America, Robert Upton, neglected his employer's business, appropriated some of his master's funds, and, in the winter of 1751-1752, began starring in Shakespeare, Rowe, Vanbrugh, and Otway, with farces by Garrick and Dodsley. By the time the Hallams arrived, some of their thunder had been stolen, and inroads had been made on the novelty of their repertory.

Both Tyler and Eola Willis suggest the early appearance of the amateur actor in colonial theatricals. In the *Virginia Gazette* for September 10, 1736, was the following:

> This evening will be performed at the Theatre by the young gentlemen of the College the Tragedy of "Cato", and on Monday, Wednesday and Friday will be acted the following comedies *by the young Gentlemen and Ladies of the country* — "The Busybody" and "The Recruiting Officer" and "The Beaux' Stratagem."

The italics are mine to stress the importance of determining whether or not these were amateurs or thus far unrecorded professional actors who attracted the attention of Colonel Thomas Jones and challenged the curiosity of Colonel William Byrd.[1] I have gone thus into some detail, not to prove anything about play writing, unless it be to show that even before the American dramatist was launched, the Indian and the Negro had appeared on the stage and in literature, the amateur had asserted his claim both as writer and actor, the theatre had taken root, and a royal governor had put into a play never acted — "Androboros" — a local problem involving church government and political favor.

[1] Hornblow gives as sources: Mary Newton Standard's "Colonial Virginia. Its People and Customs" and the Virginia *Magazine of Historical Biography*, 240, 241.

II

From the time of the arrival of the Hallams, theatre history is not so difficult to trace. The seasons' plays, the character of the company, their reception in New York, Philadelphia, Annapolis, Baltimore, and Williamsburg, are matter of theatre history. They do not concern us here except in so far as they throw light on the manners of the time. Some claim that when Garrick's "Lethe" was first performed by Hallam in Williamsburg, Singleton's prologue for the occasion was the first thing written for and addressed to an American audience. But Eola Willis gives an earlier prologue to "The Orphan", spoken in Charles-Town, Tuesday, January 24, 1734–1735, and written by an unsigned poet of South Carolina. These early days set the pace for all phases of the theatre: the dramatic critic Y.Z. (an unknown quantity!) ventures his comments on Miss Hallam's *Imogen* in the *Maryland Gazette* for September 6, 1770; another critic, *Candidus*, shows fervor over Douglass's production of "The Tempest", January 19, 1770, at the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia. One can see how important it is for all these fine points to be assembled in order to gauge the spirit of the colonial theatre, the state of culture in the theatre centres of the time. The *Virginia Gazette*, the Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island papers need to be as systematically fine-combed as the South Carolina papers seem recently to have been by Miss Willis.

Such research will not likely add any new name to the roster of American dramatists — no *Gazette* or *Post-Boy* is likely to rob Royall Tyler of being our first playwright of American social manner. But it would show the handicaps under which the manager and actor labored to gain effects, the care calculated to win favor of the public. The companies were not overlarge; casts show Hallam and Douglass doubling parts; Mrs. Hallam playing *Juliet* to her son's *Romeo*. Sometimes one gets suggestions, in the advertisements, of scenic effects and the part played by music and dance. At other times, the printed play gives indication of stage manipulation.

As excellent instances of how near the colonial stage was to the stage of the Elizabethans, Professor Oral Coad cites from "The Conquest of Canada; or, The Siege of Quebec" and Andrew Barton's "The Disappointment; or, The Force of Credulity" (1767).

The more one gathers of theatrical small talk and traditional ways, the more the colonial theatre becomes a replica of London Town. There was overcrowding of beaux on the stage[1]; there was sometimes trouble with the groundlings. Actors showed their vagaries either by riding in coaches or having private alleys to the stage door, so as to avoid the gaze of ogling trespassers. That the companies were not always supplied with the plays they needed is guessed at by the occasional advertisement, requesting the loan of the text.

Thus, one imagines that the colonial theatre was not, after all, either Drury Lane or Covent Garden. But that, as the buildings increased in size and permanence — if fires would allow them to be permanent — they became more nearly imitative of the "home" article. So that Tyrone Power and other visitors to America in the early national period (1832) commented favorably on the amplitude of their surroundings. The barrel hoop and candle lit the house, however, and Wignell, so it is said, dressed for the part, marched before Washington to the President's box with tallow dips in each hand.

III

The colonists were not wanting in social grace or mental stimulus. Literary taste was shaped by Pope and Dryden; the student love for the best was likely to be found on the most isolated plantation, or else dominated in the city home.

[1] Dunlap quotes the public notice of December 31, 1761: "Complaints having been several times made that a number of gentlemen crowd the stage and very much interrupt the performance, and as it is impossible the actors, when thus obstructed, should do that justice to their parts they otherwise would; it will be taken as a particular favour if no gentleman will be offended that he is absolutely refused admittance at the stage-door, unless he has previously secured himself a place in either the stage or upper boxes."

Archibald Henderson remarks the friendship of Godfrey for Archibald Maclaine, the Shakespearean scholar, who lived in Wilmington, North Carolina; he enumerates some of the distinguished names of subscribers to the 1765 edition of "The Prince of Parthia." It would seem that the "classical scholars of Cape Fear" were no whit less stimulating to the attractive Godfrey than the poetic society of Philadelphia, or the student atmosphere of the Philadelphia Academy under the guidance of Provost Smith. I emphasize such a bit of research as this by Doctor Henderson in his excellent reprint of "The Prince of Parthia", because I think that a similar survey of other centres with their culture would be enlightening. Annapolis, Baltimore, Newport, Albany, Perth Amboy are as significant in theatre history as Philadelphia, New York, and Boston.

These were the towns known to Hallam and Douglass, John Henry and Harper, Miss Cheer, John Hodgkinson, Mrs. Merry, and others who later faced the same colonists, turned citizens of a new republic, and combatted the same Puritan prejudices which stayed the early progress of the American Theatre. Dunlap is the source for measuring the quality and worth of these actors. The crusty old historian — for he was old when he set down from memory and hasty notes his impressions of the playhouse — brushed shoulders with these Thespians, did business with them as manager, wrote for them as playwright. Prejudiced, inaccurate as he is, yet in Dunlap there is the warmth of nearness. Such a paragraph as the following stirs the imagination more thoroughly than the accuracy of a date: "Perth Amboy, then the capital of the province of New-Jersey, and the residence of his majesty's governors, judges, treasurers, attorney-generals, and collectors, with a garrison usually of a regiment of foot, occasionally received the visits of the Thespians, and the writer has heard old ladies speak, almost in raptures, of the beauty and grace of Mrs. Douglass, and the pathos of her personation of *Jane Shore.*"

The "elegant females" of Congreve and Cibber required a grace which the early actress compassed in figure and costume.

The romantic glamor around Miss Hallam, so pleasantly fictionized by John Esten Cooke, in his novel, "The Virginia Comedians", is heightened in the *Maryland Gazette* poem by an ardent swain to the portrait of the vivacious actress by Peale — the only authentic sketch we have, since the canvas seems to be lost. The traditional beauty of the Storer sisters — especially of Maria, who became Mrs. Henry — was the talk of pre-Revolutionary theatregoers. William B. Wood, in his "Recollections", speaks of the fairy Maria: "She usually came full-dressed to the theatre in the old family coach; and the fashion of monstrous hoops worn at that day made it necessary for Mr. Henry to slide her out sideways, take her in his arms and carry her like an infant to the stage entrance."

So, the records of the colonial theatre show the actor-managers building playhouses, appealing to legislatures and the public — through newspapers — against religious prejudice and discriminating law; ingratiating themselves in favor of subscribers. The actors who came to the colonies were eager to let the "provincials" know that they were players of reputation, with a long list of rôles in which they had been hailed in England. Miss Cheer's scope was enormous. Seilhamer gives a page to the parts she assumed in two years. But then, all the players who came out to the colonies were trained in the light of big repertories: Shakespeare, Farquhar and Congreve, Rowe, Garrick and Centlivre, Goldsmith, Gay and Bickerstaff, Lillo, Cumberland and Foote, Otway, Cibber and Home — to mention them in the random way they were produced. And, in that great variety, only two American plays to be given by what was known as the American Company!

IV

Opposition to plays and players concentrated in greatest heat and effectiveness in the northern colonies. It likewise showed itself in South Carolina and Virginia, though the Cavalier spirit gave it little countenance. Cotton Mather, in 1686, is said to have anathematized stage plays. Chief

Justice Samuel Sewall, of Massachusetts, protested (1714) against acting in Boston: "Let not Christian Boston," he said, "goe beyond Heathen Rome in the practice of Shameful Vanities." Down in Virginia, after the launching of Hallam and his comedians, the Rev. Samuel Davies complained, 1755, that plays and romances were more read than "the history of the Blessed Jesus."

In every quarter there were launched sectarian appeals and political bills which sometimes passed as law, only to be abrogated later. Town objection, state objection, protests in the papers, fulsome defence of the stage by actor and playgoer, references to actor folk and profane plays in the governor's annual messages, punishment of malefactors, humorous evasions of the law, exciting escapes from pursuing officers of justice — the picture is one of added excitement to a career otherwise fraught with uncertainty and strenuousness. There was a vagabond reputation attached to the word "player" which was not at all assuaged by the appearance of roist'rous Anthony Aston: there was an unsavory brilliancy attached to the saucy looseness of London's most notorious actresses of the Garrick period. Seilhamer suggests that, in 1782, famous "Perdita" Robinson swept a Maryland gallant off his feet, even as she scandalized the English court. While this seems not likely, the menace was ever present to the colonial divine and to the "superior straightlaced" of the colonial community.

Sometimes, a town as a whole would protest against the theatre; at other times, a sect like the Quakers would appeal to the General Assembly. The newspapers from week to week carried debates for and against the subject, signed *Philodemus* and *Amanda*. These attacks on the unlawfulness of the theatre would often be answered by the actors; Douglass, for example, defended his calling from onslaught in Goddard's *Pennsylvania Chronicle* for February 9, 1767, and thereafter until May 4. Hallam and Henry, in 1790, appealed to the Massachusetts House of Representatives. The opposition was largely based on the fear that the presence of a playhouse and players would undermine the sentiments which

the pulpit was trying to instil into the hearts of the colonists; and would assuredly attract the mind of youth away from the ordinary duties of daily living. The fervor created in Albany, during December, 1785, is a typical example of the heated contests carried on by opposing forces. An appeal to the Mayor was drawn up. Such luxury and dissipation as a theatre were not needed there. These citizens might be called by the players mere rustics, but if they were rustics they did not want to be instructed in manners by any plays the actors might bring in their repertory. The theatre in Albany was to be opened "by Authority", but the *Gazette* avowed that "Such is the spirit of the people that one word as a signal, would lay the play-house in a few minutes to the ground." The drama, in the contest, met with great victory. Four voted for the appeal; nine against it, including the Mayor and Recorder. This was one among many times the "authorities" were on the side of the theatre; and there were other instances where laws against players were set aside.

Humorous indeed are the ways in which actors, like Douglass, attempted to appease the wrath of these "holy" opponents of the drama. Refused permission by the magistrate to open his new theatre, called Cruger's Wharf, in the autumn of 1758, Douglass hastened to explain that it was not a theatre but an "Historic Academy", wherein he proposed to give dissertations on subjects "Moral, Instructive and Entertaining." His desire was "to speak in Public with Propriety." In 1761, when he went to Newport, he issued the type of playbill which masqueraded for the benefit of the town.

A NEWPORT PLAYBILL[1]

King's Arms Tavern Newport, Rhode Island. On Monday, June 10, at the Public Room of the above Inn, will be delivered a Series of MORAL DIALOGUES, in Five Parts, Depicting the Evil Effects of Jealousy and other Bad Passions, and Proving that Happiness can

[1] From "The Romance of the American Theatre", by Mary Caroline Crawford. Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, 1913.

only Spring from the Pursuit of Virtue. Mr. Douglass will represent a noble and magnificent Moor named Othello, who loves a young lady named Desdemona, and after he has married her, harbors (as in too many cases) the dreadful passion of jealousy.

> Of Jealousy, our being's bane,
> Mark the small cause, and the most dreadful pain.

Mr. Allyn will depict the character of a specious villain, in the regiment of Othello, who is so base as to hate his commander on mere suspicion, and to impose on his best friend. Of such character, it is to be feared, there are thousands in the world, and the one question may present to us a salutary warning.

> The man that wrongs his master and his friend,
> What can he come to but a shameful end?

Mr. Hallam will delineate a young and thoughtless officer, who is traduced by Mr. Allyn, and getting drunk, loses his situation and his general's esteem. All young men, whatsoever, take example from Cassio.

> The ill effects of drinking would you see?
> Be warned and keep from evil company.

Mr. Morris will represent an old gentleman, the father of Desdemona, who is not cruel, or covetous, but is foolish enough to dislike the noble Moor, his son-in-law, because his face is not white, forgetting that we all spring from one root. Such prejudices are numerous and very wrong.

> Fathers beware what sense and love ye lack,
> 'Tis crime, not color, makes the being black.

Mr. Quelch will depict a fool, who wishes to become a knave, and trusting one gets killed by him. Such is the friendship of rogues — take heed.

> When fools would knaves become, how often you'll
> Perceive the knave not wiser than the fool.

Mrs. Morris will represent a young and virtuous wife, who being wrongfully suspected, gets smothered (in an adjoining room) by her husband.

> Reader, attend; and ere thou goest hence
> Let fall a tear to hapless innocence.

MRS. DOUGLASS will be her faithful attendant, who will hold out a good example to all servants, male and female, and to all people in subjection.

Obedience and gratitude
Are things as rare as they are good.

Various other dialogues, too numerous to mention here, will be delivered at night, all adapted to the improvement of the mind and manners. The whole will be repeated Wednesday and Saturday. Tickets, six shillings each, to be had within. Commencement at 7, conclusion at half-past ten, in order that every spectator may go home at a sober hour and reflect upon what he has seen before he retires to rest.

God save the king
And long may he sway
East, North, and South,
And fair America.

In 1790, a petition to open a theatre in Boston was presented to the Massachusetts State Legislature. It was rejected, November, 1791. Samuel Adams, who was the chief opponent, was of different frame of mine toward the theatre from his descendant, John Quincy Adams. A town meeting to abrogate the prohibitory measure was not successful. Adams dominated. One H. G. Otis spoke in fiery terms at Faneuil Hall against the play. Adams thundered: "Thank God there is one young man willing to step forth in the good old cause of morality and religion." That the sentiment for drama was strong is seen by the fact that Adams's voice was drowned in torrents of disapproval. But the law remained, and, despite it, the "Moral Lecture" crept in, and Governor Hancock, not thus to be hoodwinked, had the company, headed by Harper, arrested. There was a riot. The Governor's portrait was dragged from the stage box by a mob, and stamped upon: George III could not have been more roughly handled. To the theatre went audiences, armed with clubs. The legislature later repealed the bill, but Adams, then Governor, refused to sign it, and the theatre persisted in the light of public favor rather than of legal sanction. Thus, the

playhouse began in Boston as an Exhibition in Exhibition Rooms.

The arresting of actors, intent on plying their trade, on retrieving their small fortunes invested in precarious ventures, was not an uncommon occurrence; and they had a rough time of it. This opposition, which was thus generally met with in Pennsylvania, New York, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, was peculiarly stressed on the side of the playhouse and the player, not of the play. In the name of extravagant waste of money, of perversion of morals by the presence of loose and enticing persons, it was represented that there was done "manifest injury" to "this young colony and grievous scandal of religion and the laws of this Government." Later, in the early national period, we were able to see the theatre in Charleston, S. C., praised because it kept the youth of the city away from the gaming table. But the prejudice to "iniquitous play actors" persisted and handicapped the theatre for many a day, cropping up at all times. Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe was a typical descendant of this prejudice when she gave her reasons for refusing to put her sanction on a dramatization of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

V

With all this opposition, however, the drama did not fare ill in the colleges. At William and Mary, at the College of Philadelphia, at the College of New Jersey, at Harvard and Yale, and at minor schools, such as that over which Hugh Henry Brackenridge presided, not only did the undergraduates present such pieces as "Cato", but they produced playwrights, and encouraged the preparation of "dialogues" which became regular features of commencement programs.

While in tone these "dialogues" were at first evidences of allegiance to the English throne, they were likewise commentaries on the rising tide of feeling which increased with force, leading to the Revolution.

There has already been quoted the notice of September 10, 1736, heralding the presentation of "Cato" at the College

of William and Mary. The fact that this antedates 1750 or 1752, usually supposed to mark the start of theatricals in Williamsburg, is not of as much significance as that amateur theatricals flourished before the regular theatre; and that these amateurs represented college undergraduates and townsfolk as well. The efforts of the amateur in colonial theatricals—Charleston was particularly dependent on them, according to Miss Eola Willis — and when the redcoats took possession of the playhouses — have yet to be thoroughly traced. The temper of the Williamsburg faculty would be of inestimable value, if it could be determined. But the heads of our educational institutions did not frown upon the arts. Provost Smith, in Philadelphia, gave encouragement to the verses of Thomas Godfrey; President Witherspoon, at Princeton, gave advice to Hugh Henry Brackenridge, and countenanced the writing of such a "dialogue" as "The Rising Glory of America", composed by Philip Freneau and Brackenridge. Strange that theological students and their teachers should be abetting drama, while religion outside should be making every effort to handicap it.

Albert Matthews published a note in the New York *Nation* (March 19, 1914), relative to early plays in Harvard. He consulted the Diary of Dr. Nathaniel Ames, of the Class of 1761, and the written records of the College. The first reference is June 22, 1758, "Roman Father: a Play." In July, "Cato" was given with increasing perfection. In 1759, June 20, Ames said, "'The Recruiting Officer', acted by ourselves, then Public." They took the "play" to Boston, without demur, and seem only to have encountered faculty censure, when their undergraduate spirits made merry over some "profane farce." So, in the hotbed of Massachusetts opposition, the drama flourished. Matthews even suggests the probability of a drama, "Gustavus Vasa", being written by a Rev. Benjamin Colman, and given at one of the college commencements. If this should be established by full evidence, it would be sufficient to make this play the first tragedy written in America, thus antedating "The Prince of Parthia", since Colman graduated from Harvard in 1692. Neverthe-

less, drama for Boston and its environs was supported many years before a professional theatre was established, and when they could not get their plays at Harvard they travelled to Newport for them. The Abbé Robin's views, in 1781, of what he saw at Harvard and elsewhere, do not surprise us:

Their pupils often act tragedies, the subject of which is generally taken from their national events, such as the Battle of Bunkers-Hill, the burning of Charlestown, the death of General Montgomery, the capture of Burgoyne, the treason of Arnold, and the Fall of British Tyranny. You will easily conclude that in such a new nation as this, these pieces must fall infinitely short of that perfection to which our European literary productions of this kind are wrought up; but, still, they have a greater effect upon the mind than the best of ours would have among them, because those manners and customs are delineated, which are peculiar to themselves, and the events are such as interest them above all others. The drama is here reduced to its true and Ancient origin.

Thus early do we meet with a conception of the intent and scope of an American Drama which we lived up to only intermittently and with not too much fervor.

It was shortly after Robin's description that Barnabas Bidwell perpetrated a "dialogue" called "The Modern Mistake", written while he was a Junior at Yale College, and given by the Brothers in Unity. Professor Coad's investigations show that this was not the same drama as "The Mercenary Match", which was written, published, and acted, according to Dunlap, while Bidwell was a Senior at College.

The colleges were, therefore, the havens that sheltered our early playwrights. From Pennsylvania came Godfrey and Nathaniel Evans, from Princeton Freneau, Hopkinson, and Brackenridge, from Harvard an unauthenticated Colman, and from Yale Barnabas Bidwell. The "dialogue" that was mostly in vogue was nothing more than a political broadside, showing the temper of the times. The titles alone measure the quality of their sentiment: "The Military Glory of Great Britain", an entertainment by the "Graduates of the College of New Jersey", "held in Nassau-Hall, New Jersey, Sept. 29th,

1762", gave place to Freneau and Brackenridge's "The Rising Glory of America", in 1771. Hopkinson, for the Commencement of 1761, breathed, with the aid of the Rev. Provost Smith, sentiments in a dialogue and ode, memorializing "his late gracious Majesty George II." As well did they perpetuate in an "exercise" the accession of "His present Gracious Majesty, George III", for May 18, 1762.

Nathaniel Evans wrote a "dialogue" for the Commencement of the Philadelphia College with a facility that showed the form more cut for poetic expression than for drama. Such efforts were merely crude essayals, partaking more of platform eloquence than of stage effectiveness. But the college atmosphere clung to one dramatist in the person of Thomas Godfrey, Jr., who seems to have been a particular protegé of "Provost" Smith, and the particular good friend of Nathaniel Evans, and John Green, the portrait painter. All three, after Godfrey's death, combined to eulogize him in a volume of his "Juvenile Poems on Various Subjects, with The Prince of Parthia." A young man, with proclivities toward music, painting, and poetry, spoken of by the ladies of Philadelphia town as "our poet", contributed this one play, "The Prince of Parthia," to the theatre, probably inspired to do so by the excellent work of the American Company, under the redoubtable Douglass. This tragedy was produced April 24, 1767, rather hastily put on by Douglass in place of Andrew Barton's "The Disappointment; or, The Force of Credulity", an early comic opera. It had been partly written in Philadelphia and partly in Wilmington, N. C., whither Godfrey went as a factor. The fascination of the young man must have been distinct, because he found himself amidst the "good Society" of the South as much sought after as in Philadelphia. One will find in this, our first tragedy to be printed in America, much more inspiration from Addison, Shakespeare, and the Elizabethans, than from any native impulse. Henderson refers to an issue of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* which suggests that "The Prince of Parthia" was known to a small circle of Philadelphians two years before it was published; in that paper, in 1763 — the year Godfrey died — it was

SOME COLONIAL PLAYS

1714.	Hunter, Governor Robert.	Androboros: A B(i)ographical Farce in Three Acts. New York, 1714.
1759.	Godfrey, Thomas, Jr. (1736–1763).	The Prince of Parthia. Philadelphia, 1765.
1762.	Authorship unknown.	The Military Glory of Great Britain. Entertainment given by the late Candidates for the Bachelor's Degree at the close of the anniversary commencement, held in Nassau-Hall, New Jersey, September 29, 1762. Philadelphia, 1762.
1766.	Cockings, George.	The Conquest of Canada; or, The Siege of Quebec. London, 1766; Philadelphia, 1772.
1766.	Rogers, Robert (1727–1795).	Ponteach; or, The Savages of America. London, 1776.
1767.	Barton, Andrew.	The Disappointment; or, The Force of Credulity. Comic Opera. New York, 1767.
1773.	Warren, Mrs. Mercy (1728–1814).	The Adulateur. Boston, 1773.
1774.	Jefferson, Thomas (?).	A Dialogue between a Southern Delegate and his Spouse, on his return from the Grand Continental Congress. 1774.
1775.	Sewall, Jonathan Mitchell (1748–1808).	A Cure for the Spleen; or, Amusement for a Winter's Evening. Being the Substance of a Conversation on the Times, over a friendly Tankard and Pipe. New York, 1775.
1798.	Munford, Colonel Robert.	The Candidates; or, The Humors of a Virginia Election. Petersburg, 1798.

spoken of as a tragedy which "breathes all the Pathos of Otway."

VI

There is only one other play, written by a colonist, that found production on our stage before the Revolution. This was George Cockings's "The Conquest of Canada; or, The Siege of Quebec", printed in 1766, and produced in Philadelphia in 1773. It is much more to be wondered at as a native product than "The Prince of Parthia"; it is a conscious attempt to use historical material, naïvely English in its adoring speeches, with stage effects which would indicate its author to be a true dramatist. In his "To the Public", Cockings writes:

Although the Undertaking is great and arduous for a Person in my Situation of Life, unassisted, to dare attempt the sole Composition of a Tragedy; yet I was incited to the Task, by ruminating on a rapid, and almost uninterrupted Series of Successes, in 1758, and the great and ever memorable Year of 1759, &c., the glorious Effects of the amicable and happy Union, which subsisted between our gallant Troops, and intrepid Tars. . . .

At first he had bethought him to write about the whole course of the war, under the all-inclusive title of "The Matchless Æra", but he finally narrowed down to the Siege of Quebec. He continues:

So great, and many, were the remarkable Transactions of that Siege, and so much Worth, and Bravery, was there displayed, I thought there needed no additional Aid of wellwrought Fiction, or fulsome Adulation, to render it worthy of a Dramatic Representation. I therefore resolved to send it forth into the World, dressed in the amiable Garb of impartial Verity, . . . and designed to adhere strictly to historical Facts, as much as a Dramatic Performance would allow.

Here, then, is our realist, conscious of situation and character, near at hand, not drawn from models, — character written from close contact. He declares:

Not being conversant with the Stage, and consequently not well acquainted with the Rules of the Drama, as a Dramatic Writer, perhaps I may have greatly erred in the Composition of the Play, as to Time, Place, Circumstances, and many other minute Particulars, which the most judicious and nice Critics in antient Literature, may think a Work of this Kind deserves.

Why turn to this "antient Literature" for what in spirit is just as great near home? Cockings asks: Shall we British be mute when

we read with Pleasure and Admiration the Siege of *Calais*, *Aquileia*, *Addison's Cato*, and the gallant Defence of the *Thermopylæan Pass;* where the Regal Patriot *Leonidas*, with his few chosen, and ever renowned *Spartans*, *Thebans*, and *Thespians*, nobly fell, in the Defence of their Country, its Privileges and Laws?

It is a spirited war drama, adulatory of British power on land and water, descriptive of British strategy, measure of British prowess through the eye of Montcalm. Cockings was in the English governmental employ in Boston. The American Company, with Hallam, Henry, Douglass, Miss Hallam, Mrs. Morris, Mrs. Henry, Mrs. Douglass, and Miss Storer afforded the play a "star" production. The advertisements indicate that amateurs were called in to swell the pageant, and local militia supplied the necessary color. The notice said:

It will be taken as a favor if the Town for this night will dispense with a Farce, as the Stage will be much crowded with the ARTILLERY, BOATS, &c., necessary for the Representation of the Piece, and with the men from both Corps, whose assistence the Commanding Officers are good enough to indulge us with.

It is not my purpose unduly to emphasize "The Conquest of Canada"; it is an English theme. But the playwright's point of view was keen, and as such was an early contribution of value. It did not set out to picture the American scene, or an American type, as distinctly as Robert Rogers

did in "Ponteach" — a play not produced, but attempting in quite a modern spirit to plead the red man's cause. Rogers was a Major in the French and Indian Wars; he fought against America in the Revolution, and came very nearly having meted out to him the punishment usually accorded a spy, since for some time he pretended to espouse the American cause. This is our first problem play: the white man's treatment of the Indian is dwelt upon with every conscious care for subtlety. But the Indians are not individualized as the English are, and so, though the Indian type begins with this play, it has a long road to travel before it becomes a truthful picture. Forrest's *Metamora*, Fenimore Cooper's idealized *Chingachcook* and *Uncas* are not so much better than Rogers's *Chekitan*, *Philip*, and *Ponteach*.

VII

Barnabas Bidwell's "The Mercenary Match" belongs to the post-Revolutionary period, but, as a college product, it is linked with the present discussion. Young Bidwell was a Senior at Yale in 1785; it was this year that the play was written and published. Says Professor O. S. Coad: "The play is empty, it is inflated, its sentiments are hackneyed; yet there is revealed in it a feeling for felicitous poetic phrase and in general for literary effect hardly to be met with elsewhere in American drama of the eighteenth century." He likewise adds that it "belongs to the category of the bourgeois tragedy of domestic life, a type which flourished in Europe in the eighteenth century, Lillo being the chief representative in England, Lessing in Germany, and Diderot in France." In this respect it is prior to Royall Tyler, supposed, heretofore, to be the first to treat of domestic life in "The Contrast." The author was himself conscious of this distinction; he was proud to make the most of it in his Prologue:

> Good friends, who come to hear and see the play,
> Our Author bids me just appear and say,
> The characters which he unfolds to view,
> Are not sublime, although he thinks them true.

He wakes no Grecian hero from his tomb,
Or slumbering patriot of imperial Rome;
He calls no Gallic Prince or British lord,
To walk the stage, and wield the tragic sword,
Employs no Washington to aid his plan,
Or faithless Arnold — that disgrace to man: —
But shows the miseries of a man and wife,
A simple circumstance of common life.

Being a tragedy, the author has deemed it necessary to use blank verse to exploit the triangular situation of one *Jenson*, just appointed to a commission abroad, his wife, and an intriguing gallant. Indeed, unhappy is the lot of a husband whose wife exclaims:

I own, I can't dislike his character:
But there is something in the whole of him,
Discordant with the wishes of my soul.
His passions never harmonize with mine.

So discordant are they indeed that she and the gallant plot the death of this man who in his person represents to her a mercenary match: and the result is the poor fellow is murdered by a sailor, who in his turn is poisoned, while the wife is crushed to extinction by a contrite heart. Only the despicable gallant remains to be punished. Exclaims the *Mr. Worthy*, member of Congress, whose political protegé the dead husband was:

Bind all the rascals fast.
My God! Is this in Boston?

Bidwell's claim to elegant practice in literature was overclouded in his later life by his dishonesty in public office, and his flight across the border to Canada. But Yale blots out the latter record as not being that of the Barna Bidwell whose classmates hastened, under the auspices of the Rev. Ezra Styles, D.D., to enact his play as soon as written. His attainments in scholarship made him a tutor at Yale in 1787, and brought him, in 1805, from Brown University, the degree of LL.D.

VIII

The characteristics which mark the drama of the colonial period are worthy of consideration, merely because they represent the interests of playwrights who began the writing of drama in America. It was Governor Robert Hunter who, in 1714, is supposed to have been the first to put his pen to paper in dramatic form. There is only one copy existent of "Androboros: A B(i)ographical Farce." It had once belonged to David Garrick, John Philip Kemble, and the Duke of Devonshire. It is now in the library of Mr. Henry E. Huntington. The authorship of "Androboros" rests upon the name of Hunter written on the title page. He was the Royal Governor of the Colony of New York from 1710 to 1719. The play may be regarded as a muckraking diatribe against certain matters occurring in Trinity Parish, New York City. A friend of Addison and Steele, the venomous wit of Hunter played relentlessly with contemporary matters, Church politics, and colonial events. America's first satire was born of contemporary interest, and couched in language of none too polite a nature. The name "Androboros" signifies man-eater.

All told, these first beginnings are more vital in their meaning if taken as social measure of the time rather than as artistic value. Their literary merit is of second-hand significance. Occasionally the eye of the colonial writer was caught by the individuality of his local surroundings. But he was an Englishman at heart. The peculiar tendency on the part of one writer to discard as valueless to present discussion "The Conquest of Canada", merely because its theme was not local, is begging the question. All plays written by the colonists are aloof from any "national" characteristics. Because, as yet, they had had little time to nationalize, and they were still in allegiance to Great Britain. All one can hope to do with so slim a product is to call attention to its infant intentions. These intentions are of much more value than the plays themselves — which are curiosities to be prized largely as — curiosities.

CHAPTER THREE

The Dramatist of the Revolutionary Era

I

The more one advances in the study of American Drama, the more one is impressed with the fact that its bulk value is social rather than æsthetic. Were there any outstanding personalities for us to emphasize in our claim that we had an American Drama of the past, we would unhesitatingly put into the discard most of the plays we now resurrect in order to show that we did have writers who early attempted to catch those realistic characteristics which distinguished the individuals of colonial life. But, after the small particulars are tabulated, the art, the drama part of the product remains almost *nil*. It has been pointed out by several painstaking research workers that, from the very start, our rudimentary playwright dealt with frontier characters, military characters, and public officials — all crudely handled, but none the less significantly existent.

As feeling became rife in the colonies, as the rising tide of bitterness pointed to the inevitable break between Great Britain and her American possessions, temper grew in intensity in the writing of the time. There has been noted the change of fervor in "dialogue." The American Theatre was now ready to reflect the great struggle between Patriot and Tory. As significant in this respect as the broadside, the patriotic ballad, the political brief, the drama of the Revolution — still lacking in art quality — overflowed with social temper. One must regard the play of the Revolution in the

same way that Professor Moses Coit Tyler, in his "Literary History of the American Revolution", regarded every other form of native writing.

As far as the theatre itself was concerned, the change which occurred was merely a shift in management. The manager now wore a red coat; the actors became Majors of the Guard, Captains of the Engineers, and Lieutenants of the Regimental Foot. There were sufficient Loyalists in the colonies to make the theatrical seasons of the war successful. The papers of the period indicate that His Majestie's officers were good players, were experimental in that they brought to America for the first time plays which the American Company — now exiled in Jamaica because of Congress's Resolutions of 1774 — had not ventured to give. Among these were Fletcher's "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife", and Sheridan's "The Rivals", the latter presented by Clinton's Thespians.

The three phases of British theatricals in America were each with their special distinction. Burgoyne in Boston turned his dramatic talents to propaganda purposes, and shocked the Massachusetts citizen by converting Faneuil Hall into a playhouse. Howe gave charity performances in New York and Philadelphia, and, in the latter city, at the Southwark Theatre, Major André plied the brush as a scenic artist, and supplied a landscape curtain, whose subject, color, and perspective have been graphically described by Durang. Clinton, however, for five years in New York, became America's first successful commercial theatre manager. He ran his theatre at a profit; his Thespians asked the coöperation of certain professional actors and reigning Tory belles; André again became the much coveted artistic assistant, and the seasons each offered their special novelties. The inhabitants were made to feel the importance of these military performances; they were besought to aid the theatre whenever possible. If plays were needed — and the records show they were — these plays were advertised for in the current papers, in such terms as the following, the *Royal Gazette*, December 22, 1779:

The managers of the theatre, understanding that a gentleman purchased a set of Garrick's Works from Mr. Robertson, printer, will be much obliged to that gentleman if he will resign the purchase over to the theatre for the benefit of charity, or lend them the particular volume that contains the comedy of "Catherine and Petruchio."

Oftentimes, performances were handicapped by the absence of an actor on military duty.

The interdict of Congress, October 20, 1774, against extravagance and dissipation, especially against "gaming, cock-fighting, exhibitions of shews, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments"[1] virtually sealed the theatres for the colonial soldiery, although I have seen somewhere mention of Washington's disapproval of the act, and a description of his slipping off to some amusement. Nevertheless, there must have been disregard of this, otherwise it would not have been necessary for Congress, October 16, 1778, again to specify its disapproval, in such set terms as the following:

Whereas, Frequenting playhouses and theatrical entertainments has a fatal tendency to divert the minds of the people from a due attention to the means necessary to the defense of the country and the preservation of their liberties;

Resolved, That any person holding an office under the United States who shall act, promote, encourage or attend such play, shall be deemed unworthy to hold such office and shall be accordingly dismissed.

Evidently the success of the British players had challenged the ingenuity of the American soldiers; but there is also sufficient evidence, in Seilhamer, from a letter of Gérard de Rayneval, first minister to the United States, dated November 24, 1778, that the warning was partly actuated by the Presby-

[1] The actual wording was (Journal Continental Congress, 1774–1789. Ed., W. C. Ford, I, 78. Washington, 1904): "We will in our several stations, encourage frugality, economy, and industry, and promote agriculture, arts, and the manufactures of this country, especially that of wool; and will discountenance and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially all horse-racing, and all kinds of gaming, cock-fighting, exhibitions of shews, plays and other expensive diversions and entertainments."

terians of the North. For some time Pennsylvania and Maryland seem to have disregarded the orders of Congress.

SOME PLAYS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

1775.	Warren, Mrs. Mercy.	The Group, a farce, in two acts. As lately acted and as to be reacted to the wonder of all superior intelligences, nigh headquarters at Amboyne. New York, 1775.
1776.	Authorship unknown.	Battle of Brooklyn, The. Farce, in two acts, as it was performed on Long Island on Tuesday, the 27th day of August, 1776, by the Representatives of the Tyrants of America assembled at Philadelphia.
1776.	Brackenridge, Hugh Henry (1748–1816).	The Battle of Bunkers-Hill. Philadelphia, 1776.
1776.	Warren, Mrs. Mercy.	The Blockheads; or, The Affrighted Officers. Boston, 1776. (Called forth by Burgoyne's "The Blockheads of Boston.")
1776.	Leacock, John.	The Fall of British Tyranny; or, American Liberty Triumphant. Philadelphia, 1776.
1776.	Brackenridge, Hugh Henry.	The Death of General Montgomery in Storming the City of Quebec. Philadelphia, 1777.
1779.	Warren, Mrs. Mercy.	The Motley Assembly. Boston, 1779.

II

The contest in satire between Loyalist and Royalist, between Whig and Tory, began before the actual clash in arms. It ran high, coincident with the event; it misrepresented, prophesied, and the writers rushed into print, the

"book of the play" being as damp in ink as the handbills and broadsides which announced the political "news." The challenges were left unanswered; no person escaped lampooning. With all their gayety, the British were ever on the alert to let the Loyalists see that they discounted any serious outcome of the conflict. There was sufficient Tory sentiment in the colonies to flatter them in this respect. It is well to make passing mention of the well known "Mischianza", — a spectacle worthy of some foreign court, whereby Howe's soldiers registered their esteem for the retiring Commander, even though he was being deposed under a cloud. Here was America's first pageant, done with lavishness, and with an extravagance supported by voluntary subscription. André was the prime mover, the decorator par excellence. The instigators did not seem to care for negative criticism of the affair hurled at them from all quarters, both in Great Britain and America. Even though Israel Maudit might score Howe in his "Strictures on the Philadelphia Mischianza, or Triumph upon leaving America Unconquered", the brilliancy of that performance which took place at the Wharton House, on May 18, 1778, could not be dimmed. André's pen was active; he designed the tickets, he made costume plates, he shopped at the draper's, matching colored cloths. He wrote to Miss Seward, May 23, 1778, "That our sentiments might be the more unreservedly and unequivocally known, it was resolved among us that we should give him as splendid an entertainment as the shortness of time and our present situation would allow us." Then followed a detailed account.

The drama of the period is well represented by Mrs. Mercy Warren's "The Adulateur" (1773) and "The Group" (1775); Brackenridge's "The Battle of Bunkers-Hill" (1776) and "The Death of General Montgomery" (1777); the Tory satire, "A Cure for the Spleen" (1775); John Leacock's "The Fall of British Tyranny" (1776); and Burgoyne's "The Blockade." Mumford's satire, "The Patriots" (1798), was directed against pretended patriots; the anonymous "Battle of Brooklyn" (1776) presented a vulgar cartoon of Washington and his officers. Naturally, there is a more per-

sistent dwelling upon contemporary events, and the *dramatis personæ* are full of the war spirit, discussing the conflict in tavern and drawing-room. There are rudimentary attempts to depict the Yankee character; negroes move in the background; the parson as a type holds a decided position; the merchant, farmer, country justice, the congressional representative — all these move in a panorama which suggests the very substance and color of the times.

In the colleges the rising tide of feeling against Great Britain was nowhere more typically measured than at Princeton (the College of New Jersey). In 1769, some of the students formed an American Whig Society, Madison, Brackenridge, Bradford, and Freneau writing satirical poems. "The Rising Glory of America", the combined effort of Brackenridge and Freneau, was given when the two graduated, September 25, 1771. Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748-1816) was a poor boy at college; he raked together sufficient funds for his moderate needs by tutoring. His was the difficult struggle for education which characterized so many early Americans. At thirteen he had mastered Latin and Greek. He never could have gone to Princeton had not President Witherspoon consented to his taking two classes in payment for his tuition. There is even a legend that he wrote for a certain young man a public address, in exchange for which he was given a suit of clothes and a cocked hat. He studied divinity after his graduation, and became, in 1777, chaplain in the Revolutionary Army, preaching political sermons on the battlefield. But before that he taught school at an academy — Sommerset — in Maryland, where, amidst a cultured society, his wit and scholarship had free play.

While at the academy, Brackenridge put to good service his ability to write dialogue. His students needed much patriotic entertainment. It is to be inferred from his dedicatory effusion to Richard Stockton, Esquire, that "The Battle of Bunkers-Hill", written in heroic measure, was actually given, though no date is recorded. But that it was intended largely as an exercise in oratory is not only evinced by Brackenridge's own statement, but by the dialogue itself

which is rotund, and full of proper sentiments against tyranny and in favor of the free-born spirit. Here we have Warren, Putnam, and Gardiner against Gage, Howe, Burgoyne, and Clinton; here Britannia's troops realize that "these Americans" are after all to be reckoned with. Brackenridge makes the British look upon the Patriot in the same way Cockings made *Montcalm* regard *Wolfe* in "The Conquest of Canada." The piece was published in 1776, in the midst of events.

Here, then, was America's first essayal at "educational dramatics." Brackenridge hoped that his dialogues would be used in other academies than his own. In 1777, he wrote "The Death of General Montgomery", dedicated to Thomas Mifflin, Esquire, and in the published book, addressed a section, "The Author to the Public", as follows:

It is my request that the following Dramatic Composition may be considered only as a school piece. For though it is written according to the prescribed rules of the Drama, with the strictest attention to the unities of time, place, and action, yet it differs materially from the greater part of those modern performances which have obtained the name of Tragedy. It is intended for the private entertainment of Gentlemen of taste, and martial enterprize, but by no means for the exhibition of the stage. The subject is not love but valour. I meddle not with any of the effeminating passions, but consecrate my muse to the great themes of patriotic virtue, bravery and heroism.

With respect to the particular merit of the piece, I have only to say, that I flatter myself it would have been more deserving of attention, had it been drawn up in less haste. It is found by all who have attempted it, that at least one year is necessary to the composition of a good Tragedy. The following was made out at different intervals in the space of a few weeks, and therefore, according to the rule before mentioned, it must be supposed to come far short of perfection. Writing in this way is my amusement, not my business. But here it may be observed, that no man pays attention to the time spent in composing, but to the merit of the performance when it makes its appearance. Could not I have kept this small affair to my-

self some time longer, if after that period, it would have been in my power to have produced it more elegant and pleasing? I answer, that one great foundation of the merit of any performance is its being seasonable. An oration, eulogium, or production of any kind, in honour of our brave countrymen who have fallen, or of those who do yet contend in the glorious cause of freedom, is likely to do greater good and will be more acceptable at present, than hereafter, when the foe is entirely repulsed and the danger over.

For this reason I submit it in its present state to the candid and generous, with my promise, that when it shall be in my power to afford time to revise and amend it, I will endeavour to give it to the world in a Second Edition, more correct and finished.

The frame of mind here suggested, the attitude toward the dramatic form, the realization of the merit of contemporaneousness are of value as illustrating the motives actuating Brackenridge in his use of the pen, other than in the writing of sermons. His ardor as a patriot was unquestioned. He used always to travel with the Bible in his saddlebags; licensed to preach, yet he was never ordained, his conscience interfering. In 1781, he turned to Pittsburgh, having meanwhile studied law. He stood eloquently for the Federal Constitution, and his later career was largely identified with the bar of Pennsylvania.

As to the patriotic appeal formulated by Brackenridge in heroic rhythms, the style is well measured in these few lines addressed by *Gardiner* to his men at Bunkers-Hill:

> Shall we, the sons of MASSACHUSETTS-BAY,
> NEW HAMPSHIRE, and CONNECTICUT; shall we
> Fall back, dishonour'd, from our native plains,
> Mix with the savages, and roam for food,
> On western mountains, or the desert shores,
> Of Canada's cold lakes? or state more vile,
> Sit down, in humble vassalage, content
> To till the ground for these proud conquerors?
> No, fellow soldiers, let us rise this day,
> Emancipate, from such ignoble choice.

III

Satire was no more effectively handled than by Mrs. Mercy Warren (1728–1814), who, while she wrote several plays, like "The Adulateur" and "The Retreat", before Burgoyne called forth her venom, was never as partisan as she became in "The Blockheads" and "The Group." In 1790, she issued a volume of poems, wherein she included "The Sack of Rome", a play, and "The Ladies of Castile", dedicated to Washington. In her preface, she confesses her penchant for "theatrical amusement", and illustrates in her attitude the fact that Puritan prejudice was against the theatre rather than against dramatic form. She writes:

> Theatrical amusements may, sometimes, have been prostituted to the purposes of vice; yet, in an age of taste and refinement, lessons of morality, and the consequences of deviation, may, perhaps, be as successfully enforced from the stage, as by modes of instruction, less censured by the severe; while, at the same time, the exhibition of great historical events, opens a field of contemplation to the reflecting and philosophic mind.

Here again we are given an excellent statement of the motives driving our Revolutionary playwrights. I do not intend, in this survey, to discuss individual dramas; they are within reach of the student who cares to continue the subject more minutely. There is nothing more dull than the synopsis of a play whose value is more in the mental attitude of the dramatist than in the play itself. This lady, who used to wear a pompadour waist, trimmed with lace, whose sleeves were adorned with puffings of satin, became noted more for her use of satire than for the novelty of her plays. "The Adulateur" is no whit less important than "The Group", and they both are *nil* except as connected with the historical events they satirize. They both had their disguises and their keys; they both held to ridicule important persons, and no one chuckled more over the thrusts direct than John Adams, who corresponded vivaciously with Mrs. Warren, even though

later he was to resent her delineation of him in her history of the American Revolution. Yet never did he swerve from the belief that no more powerful pen was wielded at the period than that directed by "the historical, philosophical, poetical, and satirical consort of the then Colonel, since General James Warren of Plymouth, sister of the great, but forgotten, James Otis." Indeed, so closely identified was she with things satirical, that "The Motley Assembly" was attributed to her.

"The Adulateur" shows a method similar to "The Group", though lacking in the strong "occasion" which called forth the latter. Rees speaks of them both as political pamphlets which helped to inflame the colonies, and bring resistance to a head. Thus did Mrs. Warren set example for Mrs. Stowe.

The crossing of swords with Burgoyne makes Mrs. Warren of added picturesqueness. He was a no mean author himself. One may still read his "The Heiress" (performed at Drury Lane in 1786), his comic opera, "The Lord of the Manor", and his "Maid of the Oaks" (brought out by Garrick). But unfortunately the manuscript of "The Blockade of Boston" is not in existence. It was produced in Faneuil Hall and Clapp, in "A Record of the Boston Stage", notes that, during a performance, probably January 8, 1776, prior to the evacuation of the city, a very curious moment occurred. In one of its merriest scenes, a sergeant, without his hat, and in the wildest confusion, suddenly rushed on the stage, and shouted in a voice of thunder, "The rebels — the rebels — they're attacking the Neck!" which the audience, supposing it to be a part of the piece, applauded very loudly, being struck with the soldier's highly natural acting.[1] "A few minutes afterwards, the beating of drums served to break the illusion, and the scampering off of the actors put an end to the play."

This gives an adequate impression of the nearness of the event. The piece was a burlesque, a cartoon, written with that Tory spleen against Washington which marked "The Battle of Long Island." Quickly, Mrs. Warren responded. The play had been circulated, and she could answer specifically

[1] Noted in the *N. E. Chronicle*, January 25, 1776.

with "The Blockheads; or, The Affrighted Officers", printed in 1776. What did she say in her prologue?

> Your pardon first I crave for this intrusion.
> The topic's such it looks like a delusion;
> And next your candour, for I swear and vow,
> Such an attempt I never made till now.
> But constant laughing at the Desp'rate fate,
> The bastard sons of Mars endur'd of late,
> Induc'd me thus to minute down the notion,
> Which put my risibles in such commotion.
> By Yankees frighted too! oh, dire to say!
> Why Yankees sure 'at red-coats faint away!
> Oh, yes — They thought so too — for lack-a-day,
> Their gen'ral turned the *blockade* to a play:
> Poor vain poltroons — with justice we'll retort,
> And call them *blockheads* for their idle sport.

Tory politicians came under the sharp lash of Mrs. Warren's observation in "The Group", published the day before the Battle of Lexington. It is well to underscore the event, for then the lines may be judged in the light of their imminent fire. "The Group" was sent in portions to General Warren, who was on the battlefield (1775). The title-page indicates that it was enacted near headquarters, at Amboyne. It was anonymous, and those nearest Mrs. Warren showed reticence and were in accord with her desire to remain unknown as the authoress. The *dramatis personæ* — Hazlerod, Meagre, Hateall, and others with their "swarm of court sycophants, hungry harpies, and unprincipled danglers", — are none other than such noteworthy persons as Sir William Pepperell and other public individuals. To the historian, such a document is of more value than to the theatre chronicler; first-hand impressions of North and Gage: first-hand temper, which even mediocre poetry cannot, at this distance, wholly deprive of warmth.

IV

If John Leacock wrote "The Fall of British Tyranny" (1776), then he is the author of a chronicle play which is one of the first, if not the first, in America. Washington, Lee,

and Putnam stand as though posterity had already placed the laurel on their brows, invincible, with swords drawn, never to be sheathed until the issue be decided. Thus, Washington speaks, prompted by the embittered Leacock:

Finding they cannot conquer us, gladly would they make it up by a voluntary free-will offering of a million of money in bribes, rather than be obliged to relish the thoughts of sacrificing their cursed pride and false honour, they sending over to amuse us (to put us off our guard) a score or two of commissioners with sham negotiations in great state, to endeavour to effect, by bribery, deception and chicanery, what they cannot accomplish by force. Perish such wretches! — detested be their schemes! — Perish such monsters! — a reproach to human understanding — their vaunted boasts and threats will vanish like smoke, and be no more than like snow falling on the moist ground, melt in silence, and waste away — Blasted, forever blasted be the hand of the villainous traitor that receives their gold upon such terms — may he become leprous, like Naaman, the Syrian, yea, rather like Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, that it may stick to him for ever.

The scope of the scene situation indicates the chronicle character of "The Fall of British Tyranny" — St James', Boston ("while the Regulars were flying from Lexington"), overlooking Charlestown, in a chamber near Boston, where in touching manner *Clarissa* learns of her husband's death, Norfolk, Montreal, and a camp at Cambridge. Politicians, ministers, rustics, Whigs, and Tories all vie to lend atmosphere to this document, 'Tis, indeed, a black picture Leacock gives of the British.

Just as Mrs. Warren's satires required keys for the proper understanding of their sentiments, and of the forceful measuring of their cartoon value, so the author of "The Fall of British Tyranny" aimed his shafts at specific persons. We offer the identifications as follows: Lord Paramount (Mr. Bute); Lord Mock Law (Mr. Mansfield); Lord Hypocrite (Mr. Dartmouth); Lord Poltron (Mr. Sandwich); Lord Catspaw (Mr. North); Lord Wisdom (Mr. Chatham); Lord Religion (Bishop of St. Asaph); Lord Justice (Mr. Camden); Lord

Patriot (Mr. Wilkes); Bold Irishman (Mr. Burke); Judas (Mr. Hutchinson); Lord Boston (Mr. Gage); Elbow Room (Mr. Howe); Mr. Caper (Mr. Burgoyne). Against them the qualities of Washington, Lee, and Putnam are brought. Bearing the "key" in mind, new meaning is discoverable in the dialogue. *Lord Paramount*, alone, struts about, soliloquizing:

. . . 'T is I that move the mighty engine of royalty, and with the tincture of my somniferous opiate or (in the language of a courtier) by the virtue of my secret influence, I have lulled the axletree to sleep, and brought on a pleasing insensibility.

Let their champion, Lord Wisdom, groan, he is now become feeble and impotent, a mere cripple in politics; their Lord Patriot's squint has lost its basilisk effect: and the bold Irishman may bellow the *Keenew* till he's hoarse, he's no more when compar'd to me than an Irish salmon to a Scotch herring: I care not a bawbee for them all. I'll reign in Britain, I'll be king of their counsels, and chief among the princes.

And no less with marks of identification is brought into full relief the person of *Lord Wisdom*, who says:

View both houses of parliament, and count the number of Tyrants, Jacobites, Tories, Placemen, Pensioners, Sycophants, and Panders. View the constitution, is she not disrob'd and dismantled? is she not become like a virgin deflower'd? View our fleet and armies commanded by bloody, murdering butchers! View Britain herself as a sheep without a shepherd! And lastly view America, for her virtue bleeding and for her liberty weltering in her blood!

But these pictures were no blacker than the British view of America. Every shade of feeling was registered, belittling the motives and the personality of the colonials. History has upset the British prophesies of conquest, but the bitter feeling put into the dialogue is still felt and is of value to the student of social atmosphere. There were half-hearted patriots, too, who looked on satirically at the efforts of the Whigs; who sneered whenever events were dark for the Continental Army; the force of their disapproval descended upon the broad shoulders of Washington, and was registered against him by

the dramatist. On the latter score "The Motley Assembly" (1779) (at first attributed to Mrs. Warren) was aimed at high society in Boston. *Captain Aid* blows into *Mrs. Flourish's*, where she is chatting with a Tory, *Mr. Rant*. The *Captain*, with wineglass in hand, proposes a toast to "his most Christian Majesty, and godlike, glorious Washington." His ardor is coldly received.

"You have not seen all mankind, sir," retorts *Mrs. Flourish*. "I believe Mr. Washington, or General Washington, if you please, is a very honest, good kind of a man, and has taken infinite pains to keep your army together, and I wish he may find his account in it. But doubtless there are his equals — so say no more."

Aid is not to be muffled by such inconsequent treatment of his chief. "If you meant that as a compliment, Madam," he declares, "it is really so cold a one, that it has made me shiver. I will, therefore, with your leave, drop the subject, and take another glass of wine." The patriotic feeling of this farce is uppermost. Its "key" lampooned individuals under the guise of fictitious names. The Harvard copy of the play identifies them. Boston society is pictured as being sadly "rakish." The professed patriot is regarded without pity. What says *Careless*, a sea captain of hearty bearing:

> In mix'd assembly, see, they crowd the place;
> Stain to the country, to their sires, disgrace;
> Hell in some hearts, but pleasure in each face.
> All — all are qualified to join this tribe,
> Who have a hundred dollars to subscribe.

The real and fictitious patriots are again pictured and the latter again flayed by the dramatic pen of Col. William Munford in "The Patriots."

"The Battle of Brooklyn" (1776) — a Tory view of Continental leaders — does not give much credit to the rebel chiefs who are both cowards and selfish opportunists. What part the shoemaker, the rum retailer, the farmer, the parson, and the thief play in the fight for liberty is broadly sketched: they stop at nothing in their smallness of human nature.

Washington is dragged to a low level before his own men, irritating his associates by his vacillation and incompetency. He thus speaks before Putnam, Sullivan, and Stirling:

General Putnam's wisdom in ordering that road to be flanked with breast-works, is now apparent. Lord Stirling, with his usual intrepidity and precision, has reconnoitred their numbers, which he finds to be about seven thousand. General Sullivan has appointed the hill with exquisite judgment; where the brigades under him and Lord Stirling, are to take post, and act as occasion may require. Twelve thousand men are allotted for the service of sending them back to their ships. I, with eight thousand, will stay within these lines, to be called out to the slaughter and pursuit; unless our present deliberations alter this plan of operation. My Lord, the Council expects your opinion.

That his point of view is not unfraught with duplicity is clearly seen by the following:

My apprehensions from the King's troops, believe me, are trifling, compared with the risque we run, from the people of America at large. The tyranny, that our accursed usurpation has made necessary, which they now feel, and feeling, I fear, will soon make them see thro' the disguise.

That the Commander comes to hot words with his officers who have not the highest opinion of his ability, is suggested in the following scene.

PUTNAM (*to* WASHINGTON). This is no Boston work, Sir; they are in earnest! Orders must be immediately issued for the boats to be in readiness, to carry our people over to New-York.

WASHINGTON. There is time enough for that, General Putnam, after we have defended these works. The account of the battle is what I wish to hear.

PUTNAM. Defend, Sir! we cannot defend these works; our people won't defend them: if they do not see the boats; they will swim over, they won't be hemm'd in to be made minc'd of. If you don't give your orders, I will give the orders myself.

This is too much for Washington, who wishes to be always on the credit side. He replies:

If it must be so, the orders shall originate with me; and as soon as you have satisfied me on the fate of the day, proper measures shall be taken.

"A Cure for the Spleen" (1775), probably by Jonathan Mitchell Sewall, is a well written Tory tract, with the spirit of New England sharply delineated from the angle of the taproom. It declares itself to be a conversation on the times, over a friendly tankard and pipe, and those who participate are a country parson, a country justice, an innkeeper, a deacon, a barber, a Quaker, and a late Representative. Here the gossip spirit of the country store — New England's real public hall — is entertainingly measured. The arguments advanced by the several persons are interesting in the light of how events turned out: the vacillating Continental Congress, the foolish credulity of the people as to liberty — took a turn which the Tory did not reckon with and could not eventually gainsay. But, while the issue was trembling in the balance, the Tory dramatists made the most of it for propaganda sake. These men who are brought together over pipe and ale are well differentiated; they have their rural characteristics well marked. These small points in themselves are worthy excellences of our early dramatists: they are materials from which the past, in all its human quality, is reconstructed. But they are not enough to make a play. The Revolutionary writers — Whig and Tory — were special pleaders. Into the mouths of their characters, they put matters of contemporary interest; nothing universal was said, nor phrased in a way to give distinction of style. The structure of these plays was not inevitable; it was opportune, to serve a purpose, to prove a case. But the fact remains: there was an attempt at realistic treatment, there was an effort made to picture all sorts and conditions of people, there was a generous use of current event, there was a portraiture of American character, lowly and better conditioned. The very fact that the Revolutionary plays did not attempt to be crudely universal, but specifically partisan, makes them of inestimable value as human documents. The fervor of this partisan spirit

gave them style which they might otherwise never have possessed.

SOME PRE-NATIONAL PLAYS

1784. Markoe, Peter (1735–1792).
The Patriot Chief. Philadelphia, 1784.
1784. Warren, Mrs. Mercy.
The Ladies of Castile. Boston, 1790.
1785. Bidwell, Barnabas.
The Mercenary Match. New Haven, 1785.
1798. Munford, Colonel Robert.
The Patriots. Petersburg, 1798.

CHAPTER FOUR

William Dunlap and his Contemporaries

I

The beginnings of our real American Drama are identified with the names of two men: William Dunlap (1766–1839) and Royall Tyler (1757–1826). The former was more of an innovator, his life was more continuously spent in the cause of the theatre; but, strange to say, it was from the latter that Dunlap received the impulse to write plays. The variety of Dunlap's attainments as a dramatist, a manager, an historian — to say nothing of the position he occupies in the early history of painting and design in this country — makes him a significant figure for study in many directions. His connection with the early actors as a manager; his friendship with our first literary workers, like Charles Brockden Brown, James Fenimore Cooper, and Washington Irving; his correspondence with such playwrights as J. N. Barker and M. M. Noah, give a first-hand value to his impressions, and hence, though the "History of the American Theatre" was written when he was beginning to fail in health and memory, though one must account for prejudice on his part, and imperfect examination of the facts, there is no better source for early theatre atmosphere and color than this enthralling book. While we are not concerned with the record of his activity with the brush, there was even here a touch of theatricalism, — not in the pains he took to become a copyist of Benjamin West, but in the religious scenic canvases on a large scale he attempted for exhibition along a circuit, — a museum "stunt" organized so as to swell his very meagre income.

As told by Oral Coad, the "Life of William Dunlap" is a very fascinating record of unremitting effort to meet the obligations of life, and at the same time to maintain a certain standard in art and literature. The one eye that he had was centered with unending watchfulness on every form of theatre art that might satisfy his clientele. His reading was of great variety; his industry in adapting for use the things he thought might appeal to the stage was enormous. He was largely influenced by the style of drama he witnessed when he visited England. His discrimination as a dramatist was evident in the way he brought the foreign drama to the American stage. There being no real check on appropriation of foreign work without consent or purchase, it will be seen — as Mr. Coad discovered — that while, in many instances, Dunlap went to the original, whether French or German, he often made use of the best to be found in the translations which may have been published beforehand in London. But in some instances, with an instinct which was dramatic, Dunlap introduced improvements.

If, however, the true value of Dunlap is to be estimated, one must see how far he bent this universal habit of imitation to his own needs. He made use of all the forms of drama then in fashion: sentimental comedy, ballad-opera, historical dialogue, romantic tragedy, and tragi-comedy. If one would know Dunlap, one must sense the characteristics of the English dramatists then in vogue: O'Keeffe, Garrick, and such plays as "Douglas" and "Venice Preserved" are the key. One must also reckon with certain dominant notes in the prose literature of the day. He read Mrs. Anne Radcliffe; he was familiar with the "terroristic literature" of the Horace Walpole school. But his culture was such that he could draw as well on Elizabethan and Greek literature.

Mr. Coad, in his "study", is to be commended for the way in which he notes, wherever necessary, those various influences which had effect upon Dunlap's work. In fact, Dunlap himself does not hesitate to do the same. But there seems to have been dominant in him none of the weary mechanical effort of the "hack" writer. He possessed a

naming the Boxes from the principal 22
dramatic authors & actors of Great Britain
I changed it to y Dramatic authors of Europe
to the exclusion of y Actors & adopted it We
went together to y Theatre & determined some
business.

Jan y 21st Sunday On monday Last, Hodgkin-
-son & self met the Committee as appointed at
Mr Carlisle Pollock's house and the result of y
meeting was that we should admit the pro-
-prietors grates, the committee allowing us
in return an abatement, of per centage for-
-merly agreed on, during the time this re-
-gulation shall be in force, which is to be look
upon, as an experiment. The committee
talked as if their intentions were in the high-
-est degree liberal towards us. The remain-
-der of this week has been passed in unavailing
efforts to forward the finishing of y Theatre
& we find at the close of this week that we
must wait another. The company have
rec d the disapointment with apparent good
-nature. I have been obliged to borrow
money to pay Collins debts & have heard
nothing concerning him: I took up the
note of D r 500, yesterday. Games & Ten Eyck
have been very friendly. Wignel and

Facsimile Page from the Diaries of William Dunlap, in the possession of the New York Historical Society.

I will see him myself." I staid in 32
my room most of the day, but he came not.
Evening "Earl of Essex & All the world a stage"
in the House $3.17
6th. Mr Hallam was on the stage at rehear-
-sal all the morning, but spoke not to
me. Hodgkinson & Jefferson had some
altercation this morning about the ad-
-dition which Jefferson says was proms-
-d to him by Hodgkinson for his wardrobe
$2. Hodgkinson talked in a very cavalier
manner and Jefferson on his positive re-
-fusal, told him not to put his name in
the bills for Friday, which Hodgkinson did
him he should not & intimated or said that
he wanted not his services. I afterwards
did Jefferson not to determine rashly, that
I would speak to Hodgkinson again on
the subject, that my interest was almost
concerned as Mr Hodgkinson's and that
the sum in question should not by my
consent part us. I had a conversation
soon after with Hodgkinson, he said he must
-d not the money but Jefferson questioned
his veracity, I said no, only his mem-

Facsimile Page from the Diaries of William Dunlap, in the possession of the New York Historical Society.

retentive mind. Often, this fact got him into trouble: much of his plagiarism was due to the ease with which he fell into appropriating lines by others. This is a fault with many of the American dramatists. Boker was thoroughly honest in his writing. But, line by line, there is much in "Francesca da Rimini" which makes us start in recognition, if we happen to know our Shakespeare. As Dunlap said in his preface to "The Archers": "Should the reader meet with thoughts, expressions, or even a line, which is not new, I hope he will acquit me of any intention to impose on him; and consider it rather as the effect of a treacherous memory. For instance, the line of *Portia's* — 'So many widows weep their husbands slain' — since the printing of the first sheet, I understand to be the property of Lady Randolph, with only the trifling alteration of 'How' into 'So.' "

Whatever his shortcomings, therefore, William Dunlap may truly be accounted the Father of the American Drama. While his accomplishment was not high, his ambition was. And, after a reading of his "History of the American Theatre", one realizes that this manager had a commendable ideal. He was always watchful of virtue, according to the lights of the day; he was always sensitive in recording expressions of patriotic sentiment; his eye as a painter was ever appealed to by the scene. And he was ever alert to bring to the stage, and focus upon it what, from his full knowledge of world literature, he deemed would enrich it. He was a man of his time in taste, subject to the demands of the actors of the period. One cannot, as I have suggested, quite determine the value of fragmentary dialogue such as Dunlap's interlude, "Darby's Return", without knowing something of the acting capabilities of the then contemporary theatre. One must take into full account the theatre casts of the day and know something of the individual eccentricities of the actors. There is some excuse, therefore, if the historian of the American Drama dwells sometimes insistently on contemporary theatrical history as well. Dunlap himself called "Darby's Return" a "dramatic trifle", though it was raised to glory by the pleasurable reaction of the newly elected President of the United

States, George Washington. The ballad-operas, or musical plays, which have come down to us with their slim story, their undecorative dialogue, their sudden lyrical turn, are difficult to measure in print. Yet all the playwrights of the period of Dunlap wrote them: Peter Markoe, Susannah Rowson, J. N. Barker, Samuel Woodworth, and others used the model. Dunlap himself contributed to the form in "Darby's Return", "The Archers", "Sterne's Maria", "The Wild Goose Chase", "The Knight of the Guadalquiver", and "The Glory of Columbia." J. H. Payne's "Clari" was of such a form, and it was in this that "Home, Sweet Home" was sung for the first time. Royall Tyler was a librettist of the same kind. One finds Sonneck, in his important contribution, "Early Opera in America", declaring that the musical form for these librettos was similarly fixed. He writes:

If the music to Royall Tyler's libretto, "May Day in Town; or, New York in an Uproar", was "compiled from the most eminent masters with an overture and accompaniments", it must not be supposed that this procedure was characteristic of primitive conditions in America. Such pasticcios were quite the rage and the proper thing in England. Not that the English composers lacked sufficient ideas — it must be insisted that they were men of considerable talent, and an English historian will not find it very difficult to do his countrymen full justice in this respect in a comprehensive work which does not yet exist — but the powerful influence of the "Beggar's Opera", the classic among English pasticcios, was still at work.

One sees how important it is for the student, who might condemn the seemingly trivial forms of such entertainment, as so many of the musical plays were in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, to measure the social and theatrical influences shaping these forms. Coad calls attention to the effect of the Elizabethan revenge tragedy and tragedy of fate on Dunlap's "The Fatal Deception." The value in a comparative study of literature is that it not only establishes the source but it likewise measures the cultural scope of the dramatist. Dunlap claims that he had read all the plays of

English dramatic literature, and, in his "To the Public", written for the 1810 edition of "The Italian Father", he says: "Those who are well versed in old English dramatic literature, will perceive that the author has enriched his work from these obsolete sources without forfeiting his claim to originality in composition." A study of Dunlap, therefore, necessitates a watchful comparison of his plays and their background. There was little strikingly original about Dunlap: he nearly always had some source. Coad adopts the method commendably in his "Life." One recognizes how important it is to determine Dunlap's originality — if there was any — in his adequate translations, by knowing, not alone the original play from which he drew, but the numberless variations of the same play by others. Whether Caigniez or G. de Pixérécourt, the English versions were first read. It is well to note that Dunlap, according to Coad, in "The Voice of Nature" (February, 1803), introduced the first French melodrama to New York, thus opening the gates to a flood which was to overspread the American stage for many a day.

II

There is not a phase of the early American Drama that could not be made the subject of a special treatise. To my mind these diverse channels through which flow the various attempts to express certain interests, certain moods — whether of romantic comedy or terror — are more significant than the plays themselves. We have had students tracing the Gothic element in American Literature before 1835; we have had others studying the realistic presentation of American character in native American plays prior to eighteen-seventy. There is still more work to be done in this special form of criticism. But every treatment shows that the movement is bigger than the subject-matter of the individual plays. These channels of interest, which are popularly called fads, attracted groups of playwrights who were imitative, who followed the fashions. Dunlap entered this field of the Gothic on the side of literature and of painting. His canvas, "Death on the

Pale Horse", is in the tradition; so are his plays, "Fontainville Abbey", "The Knight's Adventure", "Ribbemont." The contemporary dramatists of his time resorted on all occasions to the supernatural: John Burk, Hutton, Hillhouse, Turnbull, and others. The attractiveness of it was in the air, but, as Mr. Coad has significantly said, the American temperament transformed the Gothic as it was found in foreign example. "It is plain," he writes, "that the dominant influence in American Gothic drama was the 'explained supernaturalism' that Mrs. Radcliffe popularized. Approximately four-fifths of the plays written during our period that might be classed as Gothic are free from actual supernaturalism, but gain their effect through setting and mysterious occurrences that arise from natural causes." It is not strange that Dunlap should come under the influence of the literature that popularized it, and that later was to claim the best efforts of Poe and Hawthorne, even as in England it claimed the attention of Scott and Coleridge, who made good use of it. After all, "Rip Van Winkle" is not entirely drawn from the Catskill Mountains, but was partly brought there by Irving's knowledge of German folk superstition: a supernaturalism transplanted from a foreign source to an American scene.

Our playwrights were imitative in psychological treatment, in the lighting of the American background, as witness Cooper. They did not know it as Gothic influence; they simply recognized the romance of it, the powerful effectiveness of it, the melodramatic character of it. They mixed it with their history because in their history there was a great deal of the Gothic. Salem during witchcraft days was a hot-bed of Gothic material; the American Indian brought ample folklore colored with it.

Thus, we have seen Dunlap, both in his ballad-operas and in his Gothic dramas, following in the channel of the day. His interest in Kotzebue (1761–1819) might be accounted for in similar manner. When the time came for him to put history into his plays, he had less to copy, yet a great deal to be watchful of. There was little propaganda spirit in what he wrote for the stage — although he possessed definite political

opinions: he was looking out for the interests and sensitivities of his audience. In his Preface to "André" (1798) he states his position toward contemporary material of such character. He writes:

More than nine years ago the Author made choice of the death of Major André as the subject of a Tragedy, and part of what is now offered to the public was written at that time. Many circumstances discouraged him from finishing his Play, and among them must be reckoned a prevailing opinion that recent events are unfit subjects for tragedy. These discouragements have at length all given way to his desire of bringing a story on the Stage so eminently fitted, in his opinion, to excite interest in the breasts of an American audience.

Then Dunlap becomes philosophical in his attitude toward historical materials, and adds:

In exhibiting a stage representation of a real transaction, the particulars of which are fresh in the minds of many of the audience, an author has this peculiar difficulty to struggle with, that those who know the events expect to see them *all* recorded; and any deviation from what they remember to be fact, appears to them as a fault in the poet: they are disappointed, their expectations are not fulfilled, and the writer is more or less condemned, not considering the difference between the poet and the historian, or not knowing that what is intended to be exhibited is a free poetical picture, not an exact historical portrait.

Thus does he explain the handling of his materials in the light of public sensitiveness. But there is another point to consider. Dunlap writes:

Still further difficulties has the Tragedy of "André" to surmount, difficulties independent of its own demerits, in its way to public favor. The subject necessarily involves political questions; but the Author presumes that he owes no apology to any one for having shown himself an American. . . .

Sketching the stage history of the subject-matter of "André", Professer Brander Matthews, in an introductory essay to Dunlap's play, issued as a reprint by the Dunlap

Society, calls attention to the nearness of events handled by the dramatist. The play was produced March 30, 1798. André was hanged October 2, 1780. Arnold and Washington were still alive. "The play was printed," explains Dunlap in his "History", "and is forgotten. A portion of it was incorporated with a holiday drama which the author afterwards put together, and called 'The Glory of Columbia — her Yeomanry', which was likewise published, and is occasionally murdered for the amusement of holiday fools." One can thus see from this that Dunlap did not possess over-enthusiasm for the historical celebration, though he was called upon several times to keep pace with the taste of the patriotic crowd. In the 1812 edition of "Yankee Chronology", he declares that "The song of Yankee Chronology was written for the fourth of July last, excepting the last verse. Upon the arrival of the news of the victory obtained by Captain Isaac Hull, of the *Constitution*, over the English frigate, the *Guerrière*, Mr. Cooper called upon the writer and requested an additional verse, and an introductory interlude. My wishes were too much in unison with his to allow of hesitation. On the anniversary of the evacuation of this place, another verse was requested and given; and the writer would be happy to evince his gratitude to every defender of his country's rights, by adding for each a tribute of applause, till his song outdid *Chevy-Chase* in number of verses."

Dunlap was too closely in touch with the theatre to deny it the popular concessions it always asks the dramatist to make. Nor does it seem that the actors were slow in going to the managers and dramatists of the day and telling them what was best to do. Both Wignell and Cooper thus showed no hesitation in pointing the way to Dunlap. For he was eager to be sure of public favor; he walked cautiously for all the innovations and experiments he may have made.

The unfortunate circumstances of his later life, where he had to fight against penury, made him use all his resources. The work with his brush, in this respect, was better than the work with his pen as a dramatist. He did an immense amount of creative planning: considering the biographies he prepared,

his art writings and records of the stage; considering his theatre management and the details attendant thereon, he stands a very dominant figure in the theatre of his period, — the theatre of national beginnings. He was never stodgy in his outlook; he was eager for innovation, quick to see the advantages of novelty. In 1830, he wrote a foreword to "A Trip to Niagara." In it he said:

The following Farce, for, be it remembered, it makes pretensions to no higher character, was written at the request of the Managers, and intended by them as a kind of running accompaniment to the more important product of the Scene-painter. The author has not hesitated to use any material, not already appropriated to the drama, which might answer the important purpose of keeping the audience, or spectators, in good humour, while the scenery and machinery were in preparation; but the best jokes, he believes, were never book'd before. The plan of making the prejudiced traveller owe his cure to one of his own countrymen, prevents (or was so intended) any disagreeable nationalities, and serves the further purpose of giving the author an excuse for the imperfections of the French, or Yankee character, as the representative of both is an Englishman. As his Frenchman is no Frenchman, and his Yankee an Englishman, he gains this important advantage, that any mistake of idiom will be characteristic.

It is well to call attention to this because, like Steele MacKaye, we find here that Dunlap is interested in a forward-moving type of entertainment. Coad bases his description upon accounts in the New York *Evening Post*, November 28, 1828, *et seq.* I quote as follows:

It was a farce, written to exploit a new scenic device called the Eidophusicen or Moving Diorama, by which a series of scenes could be displayed in rapid succession, so as to produce the illusion of actually passing the objects represented. The Diorama was already in use at the Park in connection with Moncrieff's "London and Paris", but the Bowery threw its rival into the shade by the size and magnificence of the spectacle involved in "A Trip to Niagara."

The plan was at the moment thoroughly in accord with the mood of Dunlap, who believed in pictorial effects in painting, and was finishing one of his large religious canvasses for exhibition. For this theater panorama, artists were being sent up the Hudson, picturing in eighteen scenes the beauties of the river. Coad records that twenty-five thousand square feet of painted area were thus used.

III

The career of William Dunlap may be considered from many angles. There are around him many social atmospheres. In all departments of activity, where he touched, he was either the centre of interesting events, or was himself an interesting event. He was born at a vital period in the history of the country, February 19, 1766; and Perth Amboy, where he uttered his first infant protest, was the capital of the Province of New Jersey, a garrison town with a picturesque aristocracy. He was old enough to have the Revolution thoroughly impressed upon his mind, and, when his family — themselves Loyalists — moved to New York, in 1777, he attended the theatre managed by British redcoats. He came to know Washington and played the flute before the great man; he also painted his portrait. His trip abroad, in 1784, gave him the benefit of Benjamin West's influence on his art, and brought him in contact with the English theatre of the period of Siddons, Jordan and Kemble. It was on his return to America that Dunlap found the town talking about Royall Tyler's "The Contrast." The spark, either of jealousy or emulation, became lit in Dunlap, and he sat him down to write the comedy, "The Modest Soldier; or, Love in New York."

Now enters the theater of the time into Dunlap's life, and it is not for us here to repeat what he has written in his "History." In May, 1796, he began his career as director of a playhouse in association with Hallam and Hodgkinson. The John Street Theatre, in New York, and the Park Theatre, in the same city, became scenes of his ceaseless activity. These were the acting days of Cooper and Mrs. Merry. They were

also the days of uncertain fights against yellow fever. And if Dunlap lost money, he might well have laid the blame largely to circumstances, like the dreaded epidemic, rather than to his tireless work as director. For no one in the theatre blamed him; the records indicate that most of his contemporaries had the greatest respect for him. The fact is, Dunlap, under all circumstances of bad luck and poverty, held his friends by sheer force of personality. And he never seemed to be downed by the ill turn of condition. He attacked his painting with the same power that he did the theatre. He left no stone unturned to better his financial condition. For theatre management had made him a bankrupt. He met President Jefferson, and from Mrs. Madison obtained the loan of a portrait to make a miniature of the First Democrat. At the request of T. A. Cooper, he became manager, in 1806, of the Park Theatre, and, as though this were not enough, began planning immediately a ten-volume edition of his plays. Only three volumes can be traced. Then entered Stephen Price into the management of the Park, and the dreams of Cooper went to pieces. Dunlap resigned. Quite in accord with the custom of the time, he became enamored with the idea of establishing a magazine, the *Monthly Recorder*, that went through five numbers in 1813, and then expired, thus to join many another such literary attempt. Thereafter, Dunlap's ventures in painting of large canvases became his great occupation. It is profitable to read his manuscript diaries, to note the varied alertness of the man, despite his failing health and the constant urge for income to support his family. North and South he travelled, even seeking employment for a while in Canada. From 1822–1825 he press-agented his own religious paintings. He was an important factor in the art development of the day, and did much for the establishment of the National Academy of Design, with Morse, Peale, Ingham, and others. It was after this that a second period of playwriting fell upon him, a period when the "History of the American Theatre" was issued. It was in 1833 (February 28) that he was given a benefit which netted him over twenty-five hundred dollars. He died in New York, Green-

wich Lane, September 28, 1839, and was buried in Perth Amboy.

IV

The nondramatic writings of William Dunlap were manifold in their interest, and measure of his friendships and professional associations. He was equally alert in estimating his literary contemporaries, his art associates like Stuart, and his stage companions, like George Frederick Cooke. His interest in history found outlet in school writing and larger research. As a contributor to the magazines, he was by no means inactive. He also ventured several times into fiction, attempting the novel form, and was often asked to write book reviews. His canvases hang in many Museums of Art. Mr. Coad's list of paintings records twenty-five miniatures and twenty oil portraits. Though some of his plays are direct in their dialogue, sure in their progressive development, and interesting in their plot and motivation — I refer particularly to "The Father; or, American Shandyism" and "Leicester" — their value is more nearly that of exemplifying certain influences in American Drama, than that of literary excellence. His "André" is the best of the André plays — far better than John Burk's historical fustian. And, as one reads Dunlap's dramas, one realizes that his sense of the theatre was more unerring than was that of any of his immediate contemporaries.

He was a man of distinct culture, he was well read, he was a sociable person, taking part in the club life of the period. He was a prejudiced party — who is not that is so actively engaged in competitive work? — in his recording of theatre history, much of it written from memory, but all of it largely first-hand narrative. He could moralize about the theatre as well as paint a portrait in words, which latter virtue pointed to no mean critical ability. "This excellent old man", Rees called him, but, in 1845, the name of Dunlap, so Rees declared, was sinking into obscurity. "I enquired at a book-stand the other day," he writes, "for Dunlap's 'History of the American Stage', and the man told me that there was no such book! Nor had he ever heard of the name. What a commentary

WILLIAM DUNLAP* (1766–1839)

For full bibliographies see Oral S. Coad's "William Dunlap", Dunlap Society, 1917.

The Father; or, American Shandyism.	John Street Theatre, New York, September 7, 1787.	
Darby's Return.	John Street Theatre, New York, November 24, 1789.	
Leicester.	In "Dramatic Works", Vol. 1, Philadelphia, 1806.	
Fontainville Abbey.	John Street Theatre, New York, February 17, 1795.	
André.	Park Theatre, New York, March 30, 1798.	
The Glory of Columbia — Her Yeomanry.	Park Theatre, New York, July 4, 1803.	
Yankee Chronology, A Song.	Park Theatre, New York, July 4, 1812.	
William Dunlap and His Writings.	By Oscar Wegelin.	*Literary Collector*, 7: 69–76, 1904.
Diaries (in manuscript).	By William Dunlap.	New York Historical Society.
Representative Plays by American Dramatists.	By Montrose J. Moses.	New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1918. Vol. 1.
A History of the American Drama.	By A. H. Quinn.	New York: Harper & Brothers. 1923. Chapter IV.
Cambridge History of American Literature.	Bibliography.	New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1917. Vol. 1.

*The table here inserted, and succeeding tables, or "chronologies", attempt to suggest, in each case, a few distinctive plays of the individual author, and a few serviceable references to his work.

upon our native literature; the puniest thing written across the water is republished here, and read with avidity — while numerous American MSS. are lying upon our bookseller's shelves, awaiting the *un*-approachable period for the poor devils to raise money to have them published." The value of Dunlap to-day is different; he has come into his own in the history of the American Drama. His "record" of the American Theatre brings more at auction in its American issue than in its London. But there has not been sufficient interest manifested in him to issue his Diaries which, still in manuscript, are full of comment and color, revelatory of his temper and temperament.

The "History" is a source-book of unending enjoyment. Let us grant that, in the scholarly sense, Dunlap was not given to subject his statements to strict verification. There are, nevertheless, a highmindedness to the narrative, an ample perspective, a rich comprehension of the theatre in all its phases, which are quite remarkable, in view of the crude conditions of the theatre at the time. With no effort, he was able to bring to his work a familiarity with the literature of many countries, and he possessed a sense of the dignity of the theatre as a social institution. He was always eager in his discussion of national aspects of the drama, and he seems to have had a desire to be inclusive of the entire country in his examination, rather than confine himself to the section he knew best. His bibliographical examination of American plays is the first of its kind, and, in his narrative, there is evidence that he sought facts from the dramatists themselves.

The student of American Drama is peculiarly fortunate in respect to the personal narratives of early theatrical life in all sections of the United States. There are many books of first-hand record which measure how the country was opened up to the actor. Perhaps Clapp, Ludlow, Sol Smith, Wemyss, and Caldwell are richer in their pioneer coloring than Dunlap, but none of them gives a greater sense of broad perspective than Dunlap. The reminiscences of Tyrone Power, the elder, may note more the vagaries of American manners, as Fanny Kemble and Mrs. Trollope noted them. But Dunlap's

"History" is a piece of distinctive critical work. He recognized the evils confronting the theatre of his day. He was always eagerly reaching out for the discovery of some remedy. One is surprised how pertinent are some of his remarks to the theatre as we face it now. It will suffice for us to make one quotation to measure the vision which he always brought to the stage. "One great theatre in each great city of the Union," he writes, "supported and guided by the State, would remedy every evil attendant on our present playhouse system. We should then have no managers seeking *only* to fill the treasury, or pay hungry creditors — no stars rendering all attraction but that of novelty unprofitable. . . . A theatre, so supported and conducted, must exhibit plays not less attractive for the purpose of mere amusement, and not less popular, but, like the novels of Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper, incomparably more fascinating, as well as instructive, than much of the trash of the stage or the circulating library of former days. Actors, however witty, would not be indulged in extemporary effusions or expletives, but speak 'that which is set down for them.'" Written in 1833, these words do not seem so very strange to the ear in 1925.

V

We have said that when Dunlap returned from his trip abroad, he found the "town" agog over the recent success of America's first native comedy, "The Contrast", written by Royall Tyler. It was produced on April 16, 1787, at the John Street Theatre, by the American Company, headed by Henry and Hallam, Thomas Wignell playing *Jonathan*. In *Jonathan* enter the first stage Yankee known to the American Theatre; enter the progenitor of a type which was to flourish for many a day in various forms of crudity, but brought to perfection of external eccentricity by the excellent acting of a long line of eccentric players. Tyler blew into the theatre, so to speak. He had never been inside a playhouse when matters relating to the capture of Shays, in 1787, sent him to New York City. Here it was that he witnessed a performance

of "The School for Scandal." The urge to write a play cannot be said to have been entirely due to this one evening's entertainment. He was a Harvard man, of the class of 1776, and Yale had given him a degree the same year. He had been a friend of John Trumbull, and, in '78, had fought with him against the British. The witty character of his later writings would indicate that it was not an imitative thing but was something native with him. And, though he was to be so prominently identified with the bar, the ease with which he sat him down and, within three weeks after "The School for Scandal" evening, produced the manuscript of a comedy which, whatever its imitative character, at least possessed a native sprightliness which must have been part of the man, suggests that he must have possessed some skill with the pen, must have had within him some literary "itch."

Tyler handed over to Wignell the rights to his little comedy, and the latter then announced, as was the custom of the day, that, as soon as he received a sufficient number of subscriptions, he would send "The Contrast" to press. Among the subscribers, it is to be noted that General Washington was foremost, and, as indication that the American dramatists considered themselves a sort of brotherhood, I also record the names of Peter Markoe, who wrote "The Patriot Chief" (1783), Samuel Low, whose political drama, "The Politician Out-witted" (1789), while never produced, was measure of certain attitudes for and against the Constitution, and Colonel David Humphreys, who wrote "The Widow of Malabar; or, The Tyranny of Custom" (1790), a translation from the French.

The introduction into "The Contrast" of "Yankee Doodle", recalls the fact that Andrew Barton's opera, "Disappointment; or, The Force of Credulity", printed in 1767, had, at an earlier date, made use of the ballad. In another connection also this ballad-opera libretto has significance, because it was scheduled for performance by Douglass, but was suddenly withdrawn in favor of Thomas Godfrey's "The Prince of Parthia."

Tyler wrote other plays of a certain timely interest, one of

them, "The Georgia Spec; or, Land in the Moon", relating to the wild-cat land deals in Georgia. In "The Doctor in Spite of Himself" he turned to Molière for inspiration. And, in accord with the fashion of the time, he wrote an opera-libretto, entitled "May Day in Town; or, New York in an Uproar", which has already been noted.

A social study of Tyler's career is needed. There is a "Life" extant, but it is still in manuscript. Periodical literature holds his name in certain prominence; so do the Vermont Bar proceedings. His brother, Colonel John Tyler, was for a time manager of the Boston Theatre, and it is certain that Royall was on intimate terms with many of the actors of his period. But his theatre interests have yet to be fully revealed. What might be brought to light in that connection, however, will not add any more to the honor he already possesses of having given the playhouse its first Yankee, of having produced a comedy which, however close to Sheridan, was nevertheless an attempt to paint the social manners of New York, when its life clustered about the Battery. The New England conscience in Tyler is here measured in this play. "The Contrast" represents a certain declaration of personal independence.

VI

Dunlap's contemporaries may be said to centre in such dramatists as Samuel Woodworth (1785–1842), James Nelson Barker (1784–1858), John Howard Payne (1791–1852), M. M. Noah (1785–1851), and those we have mentioned as having subscribed to Tyler's printed play. The playwrights of the period all followed in a well-worn channel; their attention was drawn to the same style of theme; their national interest responded to the same impulses. Their sentiments were expressed in similar rhythms. In Minshull's "Rural Felicity" (1801), *George* says to *Juliana:* "Come, permit me to exchange the essence of two lips for your virgin honey — [*Kisses her*] You are my soul's delight." Such sentiments were imitative of imported romance. Yet there was an attempt on the part of these early dramatists to picture lowly character. "Rural

Felicity" has a *dramatis personæ* almost entirely composed of such. The crude attempts at Negro dialect, the humorous "clownings" of the Connecticut Yankee — to be found in L. Beach's "Jonathan Postfree" (1807), indicate a conscious effort to scrape together native tokens of originality. But the Yankee of Beach is stereotyped. It is the same Yankee pictured by Mrs. Mowatt at a later date; it is the same Yankee conceived by the English dramatist, Tom Taylor. The formula seems to have been to put the Yankee in close contrast with the "fop" of English drama, to show his directness and honesty. He may be awkward but he is kind; he may stare at beauty, but he does not seduce it. "Yankees," exclaims *Postfree*, "do not steal girls," — a suggestion which must have brought down the house! This is the theme of Samuel Woodworth's "The Forest Rose" (1825), a pastoral opera, wherein *Postfree* of Beach becomes *Jonathan Ploughboy*. Woodworth is better known as a poet — especially as the poet of the "Old Oaken Bucket" — than as a dramatist. But "The Forest Rose" was a very popular piece. It was in the tradition of "The Beggar's Opera", just as Payne's "Clari" was. Woodworth was typical, as a playwright, of the dramatist of his time. He was willing to cater to the special actor, and aimed some of his Yankee conceits for the Yankee actor. Like Dunlap, he followed the fashions. He was prompted in similar manner by the current event. Save to note these processes by which his plays were evolved, there is nothing to stress about them as of literary value. The female conception in all those plays was of the same milk and water character. In "The Deed of Gift", *Mary Moreland* refers to "such imbecile instruments as myself." There are country characters that smack of *Mrs. Malaprop*, breaking all rules of common sense, but striving in vain to speak "according to Webster." The farmer is always lauded as being the true king of existence. "Now do I feel," cries one of them, in "The Deed of Gift", "the enviable independence of an American farmer, a title more honourable to the possessor than any that an emperor could confer." Again he says: "This is the blessing for which our fathers fought, and it is a blessing en-

joyed by the freemen of more than twenty independent States, which, like so many brilliant stars, compose the constellation of freedom." No wonder, in the sheer exuberance of the moment, he should sing a song to the tune of "Yankee Doodle." No wonder the villain, who was always the opposite of the horny-handed son of honest toil — with smooth speech and smoother hands — was always the object of scorn!

In view of such simplicity, which was unadorned except with patriotic sentiments, the more one contemplates Dunlap in comparison with his contemporaries the more solid his contribution to the American Drama seems to be. I should say that he was the most important figure in the theatre of his time, an innovator of marked originality, a worker of serious ideals. The Father of the American Theatre becomes a prominent son of the American Drama, with characteristics worthy to be considered.

CHAPTER FIVE

American Dramatists and Their Infant Industry: Dramatick Criticks, Prize Plays, The Non-Copyright Menace

I

The lot of the dramatic critic is not a happy one. His contemporaries do not sing of him in tones to assure him a golden immortality. He is usually embalmed in contumely: a crabbed, inattentive, wild fellow, whose praise has its price. Yet, since the days the vivacious Miss Hallam played *Imogen* — when the first dramatic criticism ever published in this country appeared in the columns of the *Maryland Gazette* — we have had him with us. This Y. Z. of colonial days — the grandparent of such a hated progeny, — showed himself, however, to be very much of a human. He saw Miss Hallam and she conquered; he was charmed, ravished by her delicacy of manner. "How true and thorough her knowledge of the part she personated!" he warbles, trying to hide his emotion beneath some semblance of judgment — for the beauty of Miss Hallam was a narcotic to most men of the colonies — "Her whole form and dimensions how happily convertible and universally adapted to the variety of her part." Which gives us a great deal the flavor of the woman in the eyes of the man. *Cherchez la critique!*

It was while reading Dunlap's "History of the American Theatre" that I found mention of a company of critics, whom the crochety old gentleman termed "sharp-shooters." They were banded together for the purpose of correcting the theatre

evils of the times; presumably they were a sort of club that went *en masse* to the theatre, wrote their individual opinions, and then met at a coffee-house — a sort of Algonquin place — to hear their patent remedies — of the cure or kill kind — read. I started on a hunt for these men in the newspaper files — Messrs. John Wells, Elias Hicks, Samuel Jones, William Cutting, Peter Irving, and Charles Adams — all alive and prospering in the year 1796. And the more I looked, the faster came pictures of the critical life in this country which stretched almost to the boundary whence started William Winter and Rankin Towse. They had their humors — these critics of the early Republic. They knew how to draw fire from the actor, Hodgkinson; they could play their tricks upon Dunlap, for, accustomed to sign their articles with initials, they used the letter "D" quite often, and heaped upon the one-time dramatist, manager, and painter, the responsibilities for their critical sins. Hence, when he wrote of them we must take his remarks about them with a grain of salt, as we must so much in his gossipy, first-hand picture of the American Theatre. For Dunlap could brush critics aside with an ease greater than any one else — except the present-day public! In his eyes, what was the claim of Charles Adams as a critic? Merely that he was the son of one President of the United States and the brother of another! Yet the stately style of John Wells he could appreciate.

From 1800 to 1864, there is much real matter to be gathered from the critiques of the day. And they were no insignificant type of men who came under the venomous appellations of "scalpers and tomahawkers", "gentle savages"; men of "low, egotistic, unfair, malicious character"; "rats." The spleen against the entire tribe mounts and mounts through the decades, and overflows at the end of the pen of Mr. Sedley, editor of *The Round Table*, who, on January 2, 1864, viciously berates them; accusing them of a reputation far beneath that of the lowest bandit on the roadside. He fulminates: "Managers despise them, yet dare not resist their suction. Actors despise them, yet dread their waspy stings in case they ignore them."

This article is mentioned with some show of approval by Alger, the biographer of Forrest, who adds, however, a galaxy of names that met with the democratic actor's favor, meaning, of course, that they took toward Forrest the attitude which won his approval — for remember that the meanest critic is a "dear fellow" to the man he praises! How meaningless the names sound now as they are drawn from the news which stales so fast: Duane, Chandler, and Swift, of Philadelphia; Dawson, of Cincinnati; Holley, of Louisville; Canenge, of New Orleans; Leggett and Lawson, of New York; and Oakes, of Boston. Only one stands forth for special note, James Hunter, of the *Daily Advertiser*, in Albany, around 1840, who seems to have nurtured Forrest in his early days on the stage, hence one of the best of his day — to the actor. Writes Alger: "He used to sit close to the stage, and watch the actor with the closest scrutiny, not allowing the smallest particular to escape his notice. Then at the end of the play he would in a private interview submit to his protégé the results of his observation, carefully pointing out every fault and indicating the remedy." No wonder Forrest stopped playing to go to the funeral of such a tutor of his talents!

Many are the lively glimpses we get of these old-time critics, as they went about their work. They were dashing fellows who brooked no interference. Jonathan Oldstyle — who was none other than Washington Irving, writing for his brother's paper, the *Morning Chronicle* (1802) — makes the picture more genial, but none the less denoting the careless indifference of the species. "I have seen one of them perched on the front of the box with his back to the stage, sucking the head of his stick and staring vacantly at the audience, insensible to the most interesting specimens of scenic representation, though the tear of sensibility was trembling in every eye around him." But such cold indifference did not always hold, and there were critics of the period who did not affect the lackadaisical humor described by Oldstyle. Irving never failed to see the genial fun of the situation when it came to writing.

No one could feel that William Coleman, of the New York *Evening Post*, a friend of Alexander Hamilton, was trivial in

his attitude toward the theatre. He went evening after evening to see Hodgkinson, Cooper, and others, and his column, *The Theatre Register*, was discriminating in an attempt to measure the changes in acting at each performance. This robust critic, fond of pleasure, yet not neglectful of work, as was his contemporary, Robert Treat Paine, of Boston, was of prodigious strength; his endurance once carried him from Greenfield to Northampton on skates. He is known to have killed his man in a duel in Love Lane, as Twenty-first Street in New York used to be called, and to have left the body of his adversary considerately on his doorstep. Was it an actor? When he was writing about the theatre, Dunlap was manager of the Park Theatre, and New York was only a few thousand in population.

His critiques were of a type that distinguished the culture of the day; and he wrote for the discernment of the same type of culture. One will find that such style was not confined to a single section of the country, but was the kind of education that passed muster at the time everywhere. Men read their Greek, knew their classics, recited their Shakespeare backwards, went to the theatre, and ranged themselves in partisan spirit around a player, just as they used to do in the London playhouse. They were raised on their Addison and Pope; they emulated the wit of Dr. Johnson. Whether Robert Treat Paine, of Boston, or Edgar Allan Poe, of New York, or Isaac Harby, of Charleston, the critic of the Old Stock was just the same, lauding the days of ancient Greece, painting the picture of the ideal writer of the theatre, chanting the power of the play in places where others were trying to show its utter damnation.

While this is no place to discuss them, I have found indemnifying traces of dramatic criticism on the trail of Bryant, Horace Greeley, Whitman. The theatre was an incentive to them; it drew them by its glitter, though Greeley, in his "Autobiography", wrote:

I have since thought that the wise way would be to choose a fit occasion, go *once* to a good theatre, and never darken the doors of any playhouse again.

These men were primarily interested in the broad aspects of the theatre; they were concerned with the moral effects of the playhouse, trying, no doubt, to counteract the prejudice against the theatre that gave rise to so many strictures against play-acting. But they were also wont to regard the æsthetic aspects of their subject; when they went to the drama they looked for the beauty which comes through a thorough comprehension of the whole drama, and not alone of any particular part; they were alert to catch the actor's reading, the manner in which he placed emphasis. "We are deeply impressed with the belief that the theatre is highly important to society," writes Paine, "as a great publick school, in which all classes may assemble, to acquire mutual respect from examples of good breeding, to cultivate morality from the delineations of life, to enliven social humor from the vivacity of fiction, and to imbibe correct ideas of classical reading and of our native tongue from striking instances, however rare, of the force of elocution and purity of pronunciation."

Of course such a critic was speaking in terms of the drama he thought the *beau ideal* of form and expression. To Paine, the "Merchant of Venice" stood unrivalled in this respect, and that he loved Dryden's "Spanish Fryar" was because it used Shakespeare as the model. He was witnessing the acting of Fennell and Cooper, of Mrs. Stanley and Bernard.

Isaac Harby, in Charleston, viewed his function as a critic with relentless severity. "Criticism," he said, "is the right perception of things; and, like every other faculty, can arrive at perfection only by practise, and the chastest attention to truth and delicacy. This discrimination of what is beautiful or sublime in nature or art, is the same energy, whether applied to the dissection of an animal body, or the formation of an artificial one; whether we judge of the excellence of moral or political institutions, of the taste of an epicurean banquet, of the works of science, of the flights of poetry, or of the calculations of the star-gazing sage, who determines the motions of the planets or the comet's eccentricity, — 'In ecstacy of thought!' still it is CRITICISM. It is the combination of

judgment and experience, and delicacy of nerve, and feeling and truth."

To such a critic, the theatre is a powerful engine. It can raise a passion for good or evil; it can attract in healthy enjoyment those young men who might otherwise spend their evenings in the public-house. Thus does Harby exhort: "Let not, however, only the external form attract — let intellectual beauties also share our feelings. Let the temple of the dramatic muse become not only the rendezvous of fashion and of taste, but let it redeem our youth from the dull excitement of the tavern, the poisonous contact of the gaming table. Let the theatre entice their steps to the sight of female circles, of soft and refined emotion; and moulding them, as it were, by the orphean power of poetry, into creatures of civilized society, open to their gentle ambition those scenes and objects and attentions, where still linger the last beams and vestiges of chivalry."

These critics were brought up on what they termed classic excellence, and in that mood they viewed the work of the native playwrights; in that mood they wrote plays themselves for the style of acting they adored.

II

Writing in later life of her family and their professional attainments, Fanny Kemble once said: "Our American progeny are, as a nation, devoid of the dramatic element, and have a considerable infusion of that which is theatrical, delighting, like the Athenians of old, in processions, shows, speeches, oratory, demonstrations, celebrations, and declamations, and such displays of public and private sentiment as would be repugnant to English taste and feeling; to which theatrical tendency, and the morbid love of excitement which is akin to it, I attribute the fact that Americans, both nationally and individually, are capable of a certain sympathy with the French character, in which we are wanting."

It is the identification of the theatrical with the dramatic which has been the weakness of the American Drama from its

start, and it is curious to note how it was opposed by the very type of mind that marks the dramatic critics I have tried to picture in the preceding pages. They looked for inner meaning and spiritual significance of situation, and when that was lacking — when they were greeted with merely the outward shell of show, — they spoke in no uncertain terms of the native product. Does not Dunlap declare that our first efforts in dramatic literature were deficient in literary education? Did he not mark that the theatregoers of discrimination, however much they might desire American plays, could not help but feel that the dramatists had not "matured their notions of the result of the great political changes which had taken place, to know how far to assert independence in literature or government, or how far to imitate their European ancestors?" The fact is, Dunlap, on the adoption of the Federal Constitution, being a member of the Philological Society, helped to carry "through the streets of New-York a book inscribed 'Federal Language', as if any other than the English language . . . could be desirable."

But from the very first there was uppermost in the minds of writers for the theatre in America to make use of something which would appeal directly to the sentiments and conditions of the new nation. Dunlap ranged himself in accord with the notions of James K. Paulding. The latter wrote in the *American Quarterly Review:*

> By a national drama, we mean, not merely a class of dramatic productions, written by Americans, but one appealing directly to the national feeling — founded upon domestic incidents — illustrating or satirizing domestic manners, and, above all, displaying a generous chivalry in the maintenance and vindication of those great and illustrious peculiarities of situation and character by which we are distinguished from all other nations. We do not hesitate to say that, next to the interests of eternal truth, there is no object more worthy the exercise of the highest attributes of mind than that of administering to the just pride of national character, inspiring a feeling for national glory, and inculcating a love of country.

While this objective was constantly held in mind, in response to feeling, there was but slim result. For nothing in drama of a national character survived the moment, or is now able to be revived. The mere outward shell of history was treated, and Republican sentiments had to be clothed in the speech of the foreign forum to be assured of a hearing. Not only that, but a theatre independence was being frustrated by the managerial starring system, which predetermined the shape and color of characters in drama. This was disheartening to the creative writer, and was the constant subject which heated the critical venom of the Press. In 1845, James Rees, in his attractive first survey of "The Dramatic Authors of America", prefaced his history with such sentiments as these:

The decline of the drama, and the paucity of dramatic talent among us, have tended greatly to withdraw the attention of our talented writers from the subject. Another cause of the decadency of our dramatic literature is the melodramatic and pantomimic character of the stage. These have seized upon the medium through which beauty of sentiment, sublimity of thought, and the smoothness of verse were conveyed to the people; the pathways to the temples of the histrionic muse have been obstructed, and the timid child of poesy turned back, and left the classic ground to be the arena for open lasciviousness, disgusting monstrosities, base thoughts, and low desires to exhibit all their vanities to the vulgar and depraved. The polished productions of our best writers, supported by the inimitable acting of a Booth and Forrest, scarcely survive the season which gives them birth. The well-written and popular play of "Jack Cade" would cease to attract if it were not coupled with the powerful acting of the gentleman for whom it was written. . . . There is scarcely a motive left, or an ambition to be excited, to emulate those glorious dramatists of the old English school, for if we neglect Shakespeare, is it to be expected that we will patronize R. T. Conrad, R. P. Smith, N. P. Willis, D. P. Brown and others?

Specifically, Rees railed against the preponderance of melodramatic trash, the courting of French farces and comedies, and the successful inroads of a foreign clique. Our native drama, according to him, was also handicapped by the

"outré effusions of ignorant cockneys, who send out annually their flood of folly, inundating our stage with sentiments stolen from half the circulating libraries in England, and disgracing it with their vile catch-traps, puppet-like attitudinizing, and indecent contortions of the artistes imported with them." Thus was the American dramatist boycotted from the stage, according to Rees.

The American Quarterly, for 1827, contained the words already quoted, written by Paulding. Having defined what he considered to be a national drama, he gave concrete examples of the inadequacy of the dramatist to do more than supply the player with sonorous lines which convey little or nothing "striking, touching or impassioned in the ideas or language." The yawning reader soon discovers that the dialogue is merely a mass of words, tolerably arranged. Our writers, he declares, do not feel that they can claim themselves worthy of their craft unless they become "great at swearing"; they adopt a melodramatic style, which, to his mind, is nothing more than "a total departure from nature and probability." "Does it ever occur to a particular class of dramatic writers," Paulding asks, "that people ought sometimes to talk common sense, even in a melodrama?" Lofty, noisy, and measured — these are the words hurled in 1827 against the body of America's dramatic output.

Poe inherited the dramatic instinct from both his father and mother; it found outlet in fragments of a drama, and in theatregoing. The *Broadway Journal* for 1845 was witness to his conscientiousness as a dramatic critic of Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion." The realism attempted by this dramatist was to him at once the possible strength of a modern drama and certainly the weakness of drama as then practised. After recounting the story of "Fashion", he claims for the whole a lack of originality both in plot and character; he points to the trickery of the author's invention, exclaiming: "The day has at length arrived when men demand rationalities in place of conventionalities. It will no longer do to copy, even with absolute accuracy, the whole tone of even so ingenious and really spirited a thing as the 'School for Scandal.' It was com-

paratively good in its day, but it would be positively bad at the present day, and imitations of it are inadmissible at any day." While such remarks shatter our opinion of Poe as a critic, they nonetheless contain certain reactions created by the type of social drama Mrs. Mowatt launched: the deficiency in verisimilitude of the incongruous and the farcical. Poe was not in accord with the departure toward the real in outward stage effect. If "Fashion" succeed at all, he claims, it will be because of "the very carpets, the very ottomans, the very chandeliers, and the very conservatories that gained so decided a popularity for that most inane and utterly despicable of all modern comedies — the 'London Assurance' of Boucicault." Thus to Poe "Fashion" was an imitation of the worst in English modern drama. He writes: "The drama has not declined, as many suppose: it has only been left out of sight by everything else. We must discard all models. The Elizabethan theatre should be abandoned. We need thought of our own — principles of dramatic action drawn not from the 'old dramatists' but from the fountain of a Nature that can never grow old."

It was in 1844 that Dan Marble, one of our first exponents of the Yankee type in drama, infatuated all London with his inimitable acting. He appeared in "The Vermont Wool-Dealer" and "Yankee Land." "On the Strand," writes a correspondent to *The Spirit of the Times*, "I come upon reminders of my native land; a real, live Yankee makes John Bull shake his sides with mirth over racy jokes and Jonathanisms." The next year, 1845, Marble offered a prize for new material in which to exploit his excellences. *The Spirit of the Times* begs that our literary men compete in the realm of comedy and place it on a footing with our tragedy, — and the critic points proudly to Willis's "Bianca Visconti" and "Tortesa", together with Epes Sargent's "Velasco." England had remarked about the vacuity of some of the plays sent over there with actors whose excellent art was hidden by the absurdities they had to attempt. Now was the time, appealed this critic, for the American dramatist to step forward.

The prize comedy was "Family Ties"; facing a few nights of empty boxes, it died a deserved death. The *Albion*, for January 29, 1846, made response: "It is feeble and vapid or coarsely colloquial, — even the smartness of Octave, the printer, is but a collection of office technicalities and conventional slang." It was a paltry sum to offer, the five hundred dollars used as a bait to catch the American Drama, suggested this indignant editor: it was an abortive attempt at comedy upon which talents of high order, as shown by the actors, were wasted. How to stop such a show of ineptitude? "It is in vain to expect that the first talent in the country will exercise their faculties in this, the most difficult of all literary enterprises, for so small a consideration. It will be to the interest of Managers to foster a *Native Drama*, but they must pay European prices for it, nay, they should go beyond the European standard. We may then expect to see our first men coming forward to create a Native Drama that shall reflect honour on the country."

III

The American manager was distrustful of the native product; he was much surer of his foreign purchases, and so began hiding the American playwright under anonymity. William Wood, in his excellent volume of reminiscences, is frank about the case of J. N. Barker, who had just dramatized for him Scott's "Marmion." He confesses:

The merit of the piece was positive, but the old difficulty remained. I knew the then prejudice against any native play, and concocted with Cooper [the actor] a very innocent fraud upon the public. We insinuated that the piece was a London one, had it sent to our theatre from New York, where it was made to arrive in the midst of rehearsal, in the presence of the actors, packed up exactly *like pieces we were in the habit of receiving from London. It was opened with great gravity, and announced without any author being alluded to.* None of the company were in the secret, as I well knew "these actors cannot keep counsel", not even the prompter. It was played with great success for six or seven nights, when, believing it

safe, I announced the author, and from that moment *it ceased to attract.*

Those who came to see "Marmion", by one Thomas Morton, Esquire, stayed away on being told that it was from the pen of a Philadelphian! This was the crime of 1812; the impressment of the American dramatist was no concern of an audience in the American Theatre.

The early playwright also succumbed to the habit of quick work and of adherence to news value. Richard Penn Smith wrote "The Eighth of January" (1829) to celebrate the Jackson victory of the year before, to commemorate the Battle of New Orleans. In his Preface he wrote:

"The Eighth of January" was merely intended to serve the occasion on which it was produced, and so little time was allowed for its composition, that it was sent piecemeal to the theatre to be copied, and the last act was not written until after the piece was announced, and within a week of its performance. This much is stated that those who expect a finished drama may be undeceived at the outset; but as its success on the stage far exceeded anticipation, the writer is induced to throw it before the public, trusting that what merit it appeared to possess in action, may not wholly evaporate on closer examination.

While Smith recognized the delicacy of introducing to the stage a noted character still alive, he was thoroughly of the opinion that it was time for the theatre to feel that such dramas as this were necessary to be produced on the occasion of "national festivals."

In 1835, John Howard Payne stated the position of the dramatic authors of America in regard to lack of copyright protection. England, through the efforts of Bulwer-Lytton, had passed a law correcting her neglect of the author's rights, but in the United States the matter was imminent. Most of the playwrights of this period were confident that the lack of a proper protection was being detrimental to the growth of the drama, in fact, to the growth of all our literature. Payne wrote:

What are our own laws upon this subject? We have none. Dramatists are at the mercy of managers. The now obsolete law of custom in England still remains feebly imitated with us; not in four benefits for a success, but in one alone; and even that one is usually proffered under circumstances so hopeless that authors seldom avail themselves of the opportunity. Present a play to a manager, and he delays its production till the season is withering, and then flings it upon the forlorn hope; or, if you ask a certain compensation, he replies, "We are glutted with plays from England, which we must produce, because they bring with them a fame which will excite curiosity; and for these we have only to pay the prompters, who are salaried, to smuggle over all the novelties." Within a few years some opportunities have been afforded to a few, employed by certain popular actors, travelling as stars, to write under their patronage and direction, and for their own personal aggrandizement; but such a market is very soon supplied, and perhaps not always the most desirable. To me it has never been offered. On the contrary, when I was abroad, and new productions have occasionally been wanted from England for any particular purpose in America, I have seen myself passed over, and the commission tendered to others, not Americans; and since I have been in America, play after play have I presented for performance, and have uniformly been answered, "We can get new plays from England, and for nothing."

In his Preface to "The Politicians" (1840), Cornelius Mathews takes the same stand. He is facetious, but none the less earnest beneath it all, and he was one of the chief speakers in the copyright cause whenever the subject came up for debate. The manager is a murderer of native drama; he even frowns upon native character; he has not allowed "a solitary devil of a republican to show his visnomy on the stage more than once in a quarter, and then, only with an English playwright at his back." Mathews waxes eloquent upon the manner in which our legislators will protect the manufacturer of a cotton umbrella, or the creator of a four-hooped tub, but consideration of a vagabond dramatist, — never! The American dramatist is confronted by a cheap array of farces,

burlesques, and comedies, and the home-born compositions are brushed aside.

How the dramatist was treated by the manager is seen in the humorous preface to Harby's play, "The Gordian Knot", which he submitted to Alexander Placide, of the Charleston Theatre. The young author was shunted off from time to time; now the manager had quite forgotten his script; again, would he call on the morrow and receive an opinion? Tired of this method, Harby asked the return of his drama, and, rather than make a bonfire of it, submitted it to the cold test of type. But then of a sudden it was again sent for; an actress wished it for her benefit. The parts were copied, and the fledgling author was summoned to give a "reading" to the company. At first they essayed their parts, murdering whatever excellence the text carried; openly they jeered and sneered; openly those seated there showed mirth and satisfaction at the discomfiture of the author. "At last, the 'acting manager' cried out, 'Damn it, Sully, you'll keep us here till twelve o'clock; let Mr. Harby read his own play.'" Accordingly the patient Harby (who, all this while, kept pencilling in his mind the many caprices of man, when "drest in a little brief authority") began to read. "But Mr. Sully preferred reading *himself;* and when the author good-naturedly informed him, that a word containing *two* syllables, logically contained more than *one*, the 'acting manager' started upon his feet, and with the utmost pomp and magnificence of manner, said, 'Sir, *I* am manager here; and if *you* are determined to teach an actor in *my* presence, I am determined not to submit!' Upon uttering which he *went off*. . . . Although I kept pursing up my lips with all the nerve I was master of, I could hardly refrain from bursting into a fit of laughter. However, I must compliment my philosophy; for taking up my hat and manuscript, very calmly, I bid the gentlemen and ladies *buenos noches*, and came home to my supper."

In his preface to "Moll Pitcher"(1839), J. S. Jones gives just as disconcerting impressions of the conditions faced by the playwright.

I have had objections to publishing my plays [he writes]; one, that they were written to be acted to the people, and not to be read by them; another that by the publication I lost my ownership, copyright giving no protection against representation upon the stage. As "Moll Pitcher" has been often acted without my leave, no doubt, in time, it would be printed without consent being asked. I, therefore, choose the least of two evils, accord my consent, and in this manner acquaint the critic that the construction of "Moll Pitcher" occupied but two or three days; that it is a stage drama, depending for success more upon what is done, and the manner in which the business of the piece is done, than what is said.

His opinion was that there could never be a standard American Drama until the people would pay for it, meaning, of course, the people in the theatre.

So the wrangle went on until such time as a new set of managers undertook the policies of the American Theatre. But their attitude toward the native material was just the same, because the outlook was English; the standard repertory was English. Even the final passage of a copyright bill did not mend matters much: if it was not the inundation of the English product, it was the deluge of the stage with French melodrama.

CHAPTER SIX

Drama of Types and Many Forms: 1800–1870

I

Many hours of weary reading must be the fate of the student who conscientiously familiarizes himself with the dramatists from 1800 to 1870. And when it is done, one does not rise refreshed; one's memory is not greatly enriched by scenes of mighty strength and beauty; the residue seems at first flush not to have been worth the effort. But there is an aspect of the American Drama which offers a wealth of material and a refreshment of interest. I mean the examination of it as the reflection of American life and taste. From very earliest times the playwright tried to utilize the American background; he overlaid the color upon a European model. But, nonetheless, it was an effort to be native. In the midst of the romantic, the Gothic, the melodramatic, there are ample evidences of realistic treatment in these early plays.

These dramas were largely theatre products; the prefaces to many of the printed versions carefully state that they were not written to be read but to be acted. The actor seems to have been the mainstay of this early dramaturgy. One could hardly believe that a cultured audience would find enjoyment in such a false piece of writing as John Brougham's "Temptation; or, The Irish Emigrant" (1849), or "The Game of Love" (1855), until one examined the casts and estimated what values the acting must have added to the flimsy texts.

We have never been unconscious of the fact that we had a dramatic literature. It has not been neglected, even in its

Collection New York Public Library.

A Typical Poster, announcing the play "Davy Crockett", by James E. Murdock.

Audiences of the past brought to such drama a simple interest, an unquestioning faith.

early stages. James Rees's "The Dramatic Authors of America", published in 1845, is a fascinating record. But there came a period when there was a lull in the interest of the literary historian, despite the fact that persistently managers from generation to generation, and dramatists, with their individual problems, discussed the drama in the current press, and lauded the existence of an American product. Then came Paul Leicester Ford, and Laurence Hutton, and Brander Matthews, and they began to delve into the records, and restore some of the main outlines of the past. Research brings to view many surveys of the drama according to types; many are the inventories taken of the Indian, Yankee, and historical plays; many are the hints one finds in the early magazines that the playwrights in the past utilized current events, even as closely upon the occurrence as did the dramatists of the Revolutionary period.

The early drama moved in definite currents; dramatists followed in a stream of imitation of each other. We have been surprised, whenever the old plays have been revived, either as a whole or in part, to see how quaintly entertaining they are. It is only their quaintness, their archaic, old-fashioned manner that amuses us. Crude symptoms of a real humanity may be seen in them. But, as literature, they are sad failures. When Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion" proved to be the success of a New York theatre season several years ago, the value of stock in early American plays rose. But there are not many old dramas with similar chances of success. Maybe that is because the intellectual drama and the realistic problem play have made us sophisticated, and we can no longer take the bloodhounds in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" or the man bound to the railroad track in "Under the Gaslight" or the wolves in "Davy Crockett" with that simple interest, that unquestioning faith which in the past theatre audiences gave them.

The playwrights of the early national period varied very slightly in plots, themes, emotions, expressions of sentiment. Their heroes wore the same clothes; their villains had their stock failings, and gritted their teeth in the same manner. As a matter of fact, the modern business man on the stage

— who nearly always chews violently on a cigar to show his emotion or intense thought — is not much better than these. The heroines of these plays are of the "female" kind, fluttering, clinging, in awe of the superior animal, man. The American in Europe is just as stereotyped in his manhood as the modern Cook Tourist is in his inquisitiveness. Yet, with all this dead level invention, there flows through the American Drama a contact with life which is of vital interest. One finds it in flashes of dialogue, in certain characters, in comments on matters of public interest. Professor P. I. Reed has done inestimable service in extracting these evidences for a thesis entitled "The Realistic Presentation of American Characters in Native American Plays Prior to Eighteen Seventy." The general conclusions reached are as follows:

Between 1815 and 1870 there were written a small number of American plays that are worthy of serious consideration. Although hardly one of these was able to survive its century and none may be ranked among even the lesser world-masterpieces, nevertheless there could perhaps be named a half-dozen that possess adaptability to acting, contain many of the qualities of good literature, and exhibit unmistakably the marks of professional craftsmanship and creative genius. But of these stronger plays, unfortunately, scarcely one has any realistic significance — a fact that proves how completely American realism was divorced from dignified American drama. Indeed, prior to 1870, native drama that constructively dealt with wholly American materials had made nothing more than a small beginning.

The American literary student at best has not a plethora of masterpieces to deal with in the study of American letters. Our most distinctive creative writers ceased to create when they approached the theatre. They merely imitated. One can see that in William Gilmore Simms's "Norman Maurice" (1851), and in Longfellow's "John Endicott" (1868), and "Giles Corey of the Salem Farms" (1868). Cooper in the North and Simms in the South fixed the American Indian in the minds of the reading public: but they did more than bring

the methods of Walter Scott to the backwoods. The Indian fared equally as well on the stage as he did in fiction. Robert Rogers's problem play, "Ponteach", has as much dignity to it as any of its followers. Stone's "Metamora" is as definite a creation as any figure of the forest in the *Leatherstocking Tales*. And I believe that the Yankee dramas as a whole suggest as vivid a portrait of Yankee traits as Lowell's "Biglow Papers", even though the latter contains a political satire which the former scarcely suggested.

The "type" had its distinct characteristics; it is everywhere easily identified. In his speech the Indian was a white man; also in his philosophical attitude toward his own gods. The vernacular of the Yankee was as crude as the stage Negro dialect one finds in Beach's "Jonathan Postfree." But the Yankee was much more of a caricature than the Negro. The business type, as represented in Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion" and Mrs. Bateman's "Self", has all the tokens of stress and strain that were later, in the era of Charles Klein, to be so exploited as signs of "big business." Naturally, the political type was fashioned after the current model; but it is interesting to note, in contrast, the advance made by the American dramatist in depicting national political eccentricities from the days when Preuss wrote "Fashions and Follies of Washington Life" (1857), and Hoyt wrote "A Texas Steer" (1894). In fact, I have suggested many times the advantage for the student to follow the persistence of type, thus connecting the present with the past. Can we not say that there is a line of progression from Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion" (1845), to Mrs. Bateman's "Self" (1856), to Mr. Howard's "Saratoga" (1870), to Langdon Mitchell's "The New York Idea" (1906)? Is it far-fetched to study Paulding's "Nick of the Wood" (1838) with Murdock's "Davy Crockett" (1873) and Moody's "The Great Divide" (1906), to see the refining process which has befallen the American Drama? Such progression cannot be noted in the Indian or the historical types. The red man has been peculiarly put upon the stage with only a theoretical conception of his tradition and his tragedy. The theatrical stage Indian is about as dead and as standardized as

the Indian outside the tobacco shop. And I am afraid that the historical personage has fared as badly: in the dialogue of the few plays dealing with historical subjects the characters are waxen images.

II

There is a long line of Indian plays; they are suggested in the table that follows. Beginning with the "Ponteach" of Robert Rogers, they present but small variety in their progress

SOME INDIAN PLAYS

1766. Ponteach; or, The Savages of America. Robert Rogers.
1794. Tammany; or, The Indian Chief. Anne Kemble Hatton.
1808. The Indian Princess; or, La Belle Sauvage. James Nelson Barker.
1828. The Indian Prophecy. G. W. P. Custis. (Presented, 1827)
1829. Metamora; or, The Last of the Wampanoags. John Augustus Stone.
1829. William Penn; or, The Elm Tree. Richard Penn Smith.
1830. Pocahontas; or, The Settlers of Virginia. G. W. P. Custis.
1831. The Last of the Mohicans. S. E. Glover.
1832. Oralloossa: Son of the Incas. Robert Montgomery Bird.
1832. The Liberty Tree; or, Boston Boys in '76. J. S. Jones.
1834. The Wept of Wish-ton-wish. Dramatization. (Published, 1856)
1838. Nick of the Woods. L. H. Medina.
1847. Metamora; or, The Last of the Pollywogs. Burlesque. John Brougham.
1852. De Soto, the Hero of the Mississippi. George H. Miles.

Hutton records many titles of Indian Plays in his article, "The American Play", *Lippincott*, 37: 289–298, March, 1886. Rees declares that a reaction against the Indian drama began in 1846. See also A. H. Quinn and P. I. Reed.

down to the present, when Mary Austin attempted, in "The Arrow Maker", produced by the New Theatre in the Spring of 1911, to square Indian folklore with universal primitive psychology. Mrs. Austin has written: "Before attempting to

realize the working of Indian psychology, you must first rid yourself of the notion that there is any real difference between the tribes of men except the explanations. What determines man's behaviour in the presence of fever, thunder, and the separations of death, is the nature of his guess at the causes of these things. The issues of life do not vary so much with the conditions of civilization as is popularly supposed." If this be so, then Rogers was correct in his rhythms for *Chekitan* in "Ponteach" (1766) and Barker, in "The Indian Princess" (1808), made *Pocohontas* speak in terms characteristic of all Indian maidens — and white ones as well. But there was too much consciousness of the Indian's "savage error" in the make-up of the stage red man of the early national period, even though the "savage child of savage Nature" was always particular about showing his or her racial pride. And the dramatist always seems to have had sympathy with the raw deal given the Indian; whatever eloquence there is in these plays centres in the injustice meted the red man by the white. N. H. Bannister's "Putnam, the Iron Son of '76" is representative in this respect. Says *Oneactah* (referring to his son just gone):

When first upon this throbbing heart thy mother placed thee, peace, like a dove, smiled o'er the land, and the hatchet was buried deep in the earth, the club of death lay idle in the wigwam of my fathers, and the red and the white man were friends. He has no home now save the habitation of the reptile in the murky thicket, no hope but to die, no thought save one, and that is vengeance! Hear it, ye unseen spirits of my departed fathers: look upon the land ye trod as masters, let the souls of the past inspire the last drooping limb of the falling tree to wreak upon its destroyer vengeance eternal as the red light of heaven; inspire me to conquer or to die.

This dialogue, written in 1845, is not so different from John Augustus Stone's dialogue in the unlocated "Metamora; or the Last of the Wampanoags", written in 1829. Forrest's biographer, Alger, quotes sufficiently from the play to shape some idea of its whole. *Metamora's* feeling is uncolored by

traditions peculiar to his own race, save now and again the sprinkling of such names as Manito. But he, too, is conscious of his imminent passing. What does he say:

The pale faces are around me thicker than the leaves of summer. I chase the hart in the hunting-grounds; he leads me to the white man's villages. I drive my canoe into the rivers; they are full of the white man's ships. I visit the graves of my fathers; they are lost in the white man's corn-fields. They come like the waves of the ocean forever rolling upon the shores. Surge after surge, they dash upon the beach, and every foam-drop is a white man. They swarm over the land like the dove of winter, and the red men are dropping like withered leaves.

Not any of these plays is existent on the stage to-day. The one most talked about is "Metamora", partly because Forrest brought it to such picturesque heights, and partly because its name was kept alive in a very notable burlesque by John Brougham, entitled "Po-ca-hon-tas; or, The Gentle Savage" (1855).

III

No one has, as yet, studied the Yankee and Brother Jonathan and Uncle Sam and the pedler of New England to see what relationship they bear each to the other. It is a social study which will be of value only if done before the older generation "down East" passes completely away. The evidence is still in the countryside, though modern facilities are driving the itinerant salesman with a pack on his back into the unknown. There is very little written on the Yankee; there is very slight record of his peculiar language or his typical dress. Literature mentions him, but not with the vividness with which Dorothy Wordsworth mentions the pedler who used to frequent the byways of Grasmere and the Lake District. The gypsy trails in the latest model car; the tinsmith, the seller of general wares, has become urbane. The characteristic thing about the stage Yankee was his rustic, almost clownish manner. Was he an emanation of the dramatist's

invention? Was Uncle Sam the model? Did he embody some of the characteristics of the Yankee pedler? These points have yet to be proven.

As has been suggested, the Yankee character is a fascinating study for some student. Ample evidence of his characteristics is to be found in the plays, from the time of Royall Tyler. His ear-marks were in language, costume, and name — the latter being particularly varied, even though Jonathan predominated: for example, *Nathan Yank*, *Solomon Swop*, *Industrious Doolittle*, *Seth Sage*, *Horsebean Hemlock*, *Hiram Dodge*, *Deuteronomy Dutiful*, *Obediah Whitcher*, *Jedediah*, *Gumption Cute*. The reader is advised to consult such plays as "The Contrast" (1787), Royall Tyler; "The Modest Soldier" (1787), Dunlap; "The Politician Out-witted" (1788), Low; "The Traveller Returned" (1796); "Rural Felicity" (1801), Minshull; "Love and Friendship" (1809), Lindsley; "Tears and Smiles" (1807), Barker; "Fashionable Follies" (1809), Hutton; "The Deed of Gift" (1822), Woodworth; "The Saw-Mill" (1824), Hawkins; "The Forest Rose" (1825), Woodworth; "Montgomery" (1825), Finn; "The Times" (1829); "A Trip to Niagara" (1829, 1830), Dunlap. Among the dramatists of Yankee types, Joseph S. Jones was the most prolific. Consult his "The Liberty Tree; or, Boston Boys in '76" (1832), "The Green Mountain Boy" (1833), "The People's Lawyer" (1839), "The Silver Spoon" (1852). Cornelius A. Logan wrote "Yankee Land" (1834), in which James H. Hackett played *Lot Sap Sago*, and also "The Vermont Wool-Dealer" (1840). Consult P. I. Reed's "The Realistic Presentation of American Characters in Native American Plays Prior to Eighteen Seventy." See Moses' "Representative Plays by American Dramatists", Vol. II, for "The People's Lawyer", and a discussion of Yankee dramas.

We know that he developed by what he fed on in the theatre; that he was a type observed first hand; but whether or not his identifying vagaries were caught and noted by the actor and then passed on to the later dramatists has to be determined further. Royall Tyler came from the Vermont hills and lo, the Yankee became the one native mark in a comedy, "The Contrast", more Sheridan than "homemade." Did Tyler set the fashion? Was the Yankee made attractive to the stage because of his dialect or because he was a unique phase of humanity? It would seem, after one had read

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through some of the correspondence of Hackett and "Yankee" Hill, after one had weighed the opinions of contemporaries like Wemyss and Ludlow, that the exploitation of the Yankee rôle was in large measure due to its adaptability to the actor's peculiar gifts. Was it always a spontaneous creation on the part of the playwright — this Yankee type, — or was it merely the re-dressing of a model in the clothes of New England? Take, for instance, C. A. Logan's "Yankee Land" (1834), in which the character of *Lot Sap Sago* was assumed by Hackett. Note the costume indications. The acting edition of the play calls for "Drab long-tail coat; broad stripe vest; eccentric striped trousers; straps and boots; yeoman crown hat; bright colored cravat." It is not difficult to recognize the model for such a being. Take Hackett's "Jonathan in England" (1828); it was merely Colman's "Who Wants a Guinea?" converted into the vernacular. *Solomon Grundy*, the French cockney, becomes *Jonathan*, the gen-u-ine Yankee. The clown of English comedy, says Wemyss, becomes acclimatized "down East." Hackett was sensitive about his specialty; he resented Hill following so closely in his self-relegated territory. But, in the thirties, Hill became supreme. Says his biographer:

It was this faculty, to use a hackneyed phrase, of throwing himself body and spirit, into a part, which gave to his Yankee a richness and truthfulness not approached by any other actor before or since his time. He did not merely put on a flaxen wig, a long-tailed coat, a short vest, a bell-crowned hat, and straps to his pantaloons long enough for suspenders, nor thus attired did he content himself by imitating the peculiar drawl and queer expressions of the Yankee, for the veriest bungler on earth can do all this, but the spirit of Yankeedom pervaded every action of his body, peeped from his expressive eyes with such sly meaning, that it was difficult for the time being, not to believe it was a mistake in the bills, when they announced Mr. Hill as *Mr. Wheeler*, instead of announcing the veritable *Major Wheeler* himself.

What were the characteristics of this Yankee type? As early as Royall Tyler, he was free with his "tarnation"

"If I pester you any, jest say so;
I'll take the hint without the kick."

"Squire Winslow, how do you do? I
most broke my shanks on your stairs."

TWO POSES OF JOHN E. OWENS, AS *Solon Shingle*, IN A PLAY BY J. S. JONES, ORIGINALLY CALLED "THE PEOPLE'S LAWYER."

Reproductions from the collection of Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

expletive; he was a country bumpkin, wide-mouthed as to city ways. Exclaims *Jonathan:*

Gor! she's gone off in a swinging passion, before I had time to think of consequences. If this is the way with your city ladies, give me the twenty acres of rock, the bible, the cow, and Tabitha, and a little peaceable bundling.

In "The People's Lawyer" (1839), by Doctor J. S. Jones, *Solon Shingle's* father "fit" in the Revolution, he "druv" a wagon. Such dialect indications as "tew" for too, "gal" for girl were common. But the stage Yankee departed from the sociological study of one by being upright in most cases, whereas, the true pedler was more subtle — "shrewd, witty, insinuating and wheedling", says one writer, but not always "altogether downright particular honest." To judge by the evolution of the rôle of *Solon Shingle* in the hands of the comedian, John E. Owens, the stage Yankee was molded by the actor rather than by the playwright. But, despite the conventional aspects of this stage character, in the many plays which featured him there was something real about him, something homely. That he was closely related to the Yankee pedler is borne out by the character of *Jonathan* in Lindsley's "Love and Friendship" (1807), who finds himself in Charleston, S. C., to sell his "notions." He says:

Here I am, slick 'nough, and where to go next, be cust 'f I know. This must be Broad-street, and broad 'nough 'tis tewe, by gum! I've been walkin' up it this good fifteen minutes, and darn'd 'f I've got acrost it yit. I must keep tewe eyes 'bout me, or I shall be intewe King-street, and the black-barded Jews'll shave the hair off my teeth. . . . This here Charleston's such a rotten hot place, there's no livin' in 't; then there's sich a tarnation sight 'f negurs, black as the old feller 'imself, a body kan't stir but they has 'um at their nose or their heels. It beats all nater! Never fetch me, 'f I don't wish I was t' hum agin, with all my heart.

When, in 1836, Hill played in London, and took his audiences by storm, the papers were careful to emphasize, for the

benefit of the British public, that true as the Yankee was to the actual type, it must not be thought for an instant that the stage Yankee was a portrait of all Americans, — rather was he a class in himself! I am inclined to believe that the species of entertainment, which Hackett and Hill and Marble gave, was largely abetted in public favor by the appearance of Charles Mathews, who was seen in America during 1822 in programs of varied dialects.

SOME YANKEE PLAYS

Arranged alphabetically, according to authors

Beach, L.	Jonathan Postfree; or, The Honest Yankee. 1807.
Botsford, Mrs. Margaret.	The Reign of Reform; or, Yankee Doodle Court. By a Lady. 1830.
Conway, H. J.	Our Jemimy; or, Connecticut Courtship. Hiram Hireout; or, Followed by Fortune. 1851.
Durivage, O. E.	The Stage-Struck Yankee. 1845.
Hawkins, Micah.	The Saw-Mill; or, A Yankee Trick. 1824 (1829).
Humphreys, David.	The Yankee in England. 1815.
Jones, Joseph S.	Solon Shingle [The People's Lawyer]. 1839.
Lindsley, A. B.	Love and Friendship; or, Yankee Notions. 1807–8 (1809).
Logan, Cornelius A.	Yankee Land. 1834.
Steele, Silas S.	The Brazen Drum; or, The Yankee in Poland. 1841.
Woodworth, Samuel.	The Forest Rose; or, American Farmers. A Pastoral Opera, with music by John Davies. 1825.

IV

Mrs. Anna Cora Mowatt's "Fashion", first produced at the Park Theatre, New York, March 24, 1845, represents the high-water mark in the social drama of the period. It carried

society a little farther uptown, for one must remember that Tyler's "The Contrast" was laid very near the Battery, where the beaux walked on Sunday afternoons. Mrs. Mowatt is one of the rare "female" figures to practise the art of play writing in America, Mrs. Mercy Warren, Charlotte Lennox, and Susannah Rowson being her forerunners. Financial reverses brought her to the stage both as an actress and a writer. She lived in a day and generation when a "female" employed in some public work was regarded with amazement. To practise the art of poetry was a bold enterprise; to write a novel only excusable under anonymity. There is no more fascinating reading than Mrs. Mowatt's "Autobiography of an Actress." Here one is given the measure of her mind, the atmosphere of the social life which she led, the interests and concerns of the time. Here one readily understands the incentive which made her write "Fashion", as a satirical exposé of a certain parvenuism which she saw around her. Crude as the play is, in many ways, the ease with which it caught the public fancy shows the depths to which Mrs. Mowatt's fun cut. Whenever I read through the play and come upon *Count Jolimaitre*, "a fashionable European importation", I am reminded of the convention of play writing noted by Bronson Howard as being binding in the years between 1870 and 1880. In substance, it was that if the playwright wished some villainy of faithlessness to be committed against the female sex, a Frenchman must do it. It is easy to find in *Mrs. Tiffany* some relationship to *Mrs. Malaprop*, and many are the plays before "Fashion" and after that show in similar ways the foolhardiness of the aspiring mother. *Adam Trueman*, the farmer from Catteraugus, has all the downrightness of the Yankee; his Americanism is unmistakable; it fairly shrieks. In *Zeke*, Negro delineation takes on a more realistic form than was usual in the early plays. *Cesar*, in "Jonathan Postfree" (1807) talks like a Chinaman: the sheer art of dialect was slow to evolve in American literature. Real Negro idioms were not truthfully put down until Joel Chandler Harris gathered his "Uncle Remus" stories. What says *Cesar:*

I no likee this massa Fopling — I don't know what ole missee can see in him to make her likee him so much : — he no half so good as Jemmy Seamore : — and younga missee Maria she know it ; — she love one little finger of Jemmy more better than Fopling's whole body — but I must holee my tongue — here he come —

But that the stage black man often had sensibility, just as the stage Yankee had a preponderance of national virtue, is seen in another sentiment uttered by *Cesar* who has failed to get a tip from Fopling for polishing his shoes :

Me no muchee fear the weight of your cane, massa, such a little tick no hurtee me much — and me didn't expect to feel the weight of your money — me only try to see if you had any soul or no.

Thus, long before "Uncle Tom's Cabin", the sentimental attitude toward the Negro was manifest in the theatre. But the mechanics of realistic stage dialogue were weak. *Zeke*, in "Fashion", and the Negro in Poe's "The Gold Bug", are of the same pattern.

The casualness with which Mrs. Mowatt dropped into the theatre is indicated in her narrative. The "E. S." must have been Epes Sargent.

"Why do you not write a play?" said E. S. — to me one morning. "You have more decided talent for the stage than for anything else. If we can get it accepted for the Park Theatre, and if it should succeed, you have a new and wide field of exertion opened to you — one in which success is very rare, but for which your turn of mind has particularly fitted you."

"What shall I attempt, comedy or tragedy?"

"Comedy, decidedly ; because you can only write what you feel, and you are 'nothing if not critical' — besides, you will have a fresh channel for the sarcastic ebullitions with which you so constantly indulge us."

Mrs. Mowatt acknowledged that she felt she might make use of the vein of sarcasm which adversity and society had developed in her to profitable advantage! She approached the

theatre with no high intentions of adding to dramatic literature. Her confessions are naïve.

There was no attempt in "Fashion" at fine writing [she says]. I designed the play wholly as an *acting* comedy. A *dramatic*, not a literary, success was what I desired to achieve. Caution suggested my not aiming at both at once.

It is interesting to note that when her second play, "Armand; or, The Child of the People", was given in London (1849), the sub-title was expunged by the licenser, and was changed to "The Peer and the Peasant." Various speeches were deleted, which had gone well in Boston and New York, because they suggested anti-monarchical tendencies. It is to be remembered that the American dramatist of that period was only too anxious to show his Americanism in this manner. "Jack Cade" lauded the democratic spirit. And a large part of the bitter differences between Forrest and Macready, which resulted in the disastrous Astor Place riot, in New York, was motivated by the strong feeling which existed between the two nations, and which took the form of what Lowell called "condescension."

Another point to note was that the publishing of plays coincident with the performance was not an unusual thing. Mrs. Mowatt refers to the publication of "Armand" close on its first performance. She writes:

The copies nightly sold at the door of the theatre caused great annoyance to the dramatic representatives of the play. It is a singular fact, that if the eye of an actor chance to rest upon an individual in the boxes who is deeply absorbed in a book, and if the actor fancy that the book is of the play then performing, he will almost invariably forget his part, though he may have enacted it correctly a dozen of times. Sometimes, the mere leaf-turning of books in the hands of the audience will throw a whole company into confusion, and the prompter's voice may be heard vainly attempting to plead the cause of the author.

Now, both in Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion" and Mrs. Sidney Bateman's "Self" there are to be found the small points of

current taste which add to their interest as mere social documents, however trite they may seem to the theatre of to-day as drama. "Fashion", in its revival recently, lent itself to a transposition which made it a picturesque caricature of the manner and decoration of the "fabulous forties." The same false note of parvenuism that was capitalized by Mrs. Mowatt is lampooned by Mrs. Bateman. What does *Mrs. Apex*, the social climber, say to her husband, the downright American:

> You are just the man would like to dress in linsey-woolsey, and cowhide brogans, while Mary and I, in check aprons and shilling calicoes, did our own chores. You are just the man to admire the primitive style.

The character of *Unit* in "Self" represents "us Republicans", who are better off, he thinks, if we keep our money hidden in a worsted mit, rather than deposit it in a *Wild Cat Bank*. Thus flows contemporary life through the tritest dialogue and the weakest plot. And the student, unfortunately, who wishes to gather such evidence, as Professor Reed did for his commendable thesis, must wade through the text with no hope of being stirred by any abiding dramaturgy.

V

The American Drama is not punctuated by any great historical sense. We have already seen the American stage used for dramatic broadsides, and the college platforms resounding to thunderous praise of and invectives against the British crown during the Revolutionary period. We have also noted the dramas that came close upon the idolization of Washington as a leader, during his lifetime; and as well the Tory sentiments against him which persisted even after the Constitution was launched. We have seen plays which were dramatic threnodies on the death of General Montgomery and the struggle between Wolfe and Montcalm. André and Arnold came with contemporary fervor to the theatre. But in none of these plays was the heroic sentiment worth preserving in its drama form. And just as it is necessary to square up

theatrical character with historical, so, in the discussion of politics, one must measure the prejudices of the playwright, on which side he is arguing, as in "Federalism Triumphant", by an unknown hand, and "The Politician Out-witted" (1789), by Samuel Low. In the former you are given a political satire, the subtitle of which runs, "In the steady habits of Connecticut Alone, or, The Turnpike road to a fortune . . . as performed at the Theatres Royal and Aristocratic at Hartford and New Haven, October, 1801." In the latter, under the guise of a comedy of manners, you are offered a debate between Federalist and anti-Federalist, conviction here being woven in with the crudest sort of story. There is ample evidence that the subject of the Constitution was a welcome one to the playwright. But the plays were not strictly of an historical character unless they dealt specifically with certain historical events, as specific as Bannister's "Putnam, the Iron Son of '76", or Burnett's "Blanche of Brandywine" (1858), or Bunce's "Love in '76" (1857). Then the patriotic spectacle unfolded itself in various ways; in Bannister and Burnett full of bluster and proper sentiment; in Bunce full of "bloodless" war, an English comedy spirit, a parlor sprightliness that had little of the martial about it except in the soldiers' uniforms. In this respect Bunce was a forerunner of Fitch. One can measure the very spectacular character of most of these entertainments by the specifications for their scenic color. The Bannister play is typical, and probably among the most extensive. The directions for the Vision scene are as follows:

Slow music. Three quarters dark. Ethereal firmament, filled with silver stars. . . . Eagle flying in the air, to ascend, looking down upon a lion couchant, on trap . . . to descend. The goddesses discovered in various groups, bearing blue wands with silver stars. God of War . . . on small Roman chariot, to descend. Goddess of Liberty on trap . . . in small Roman chariot, to descend.

After chorus:

"We will be free, we will be free,"

Music changes. Eagle ascends and lion descends. God-

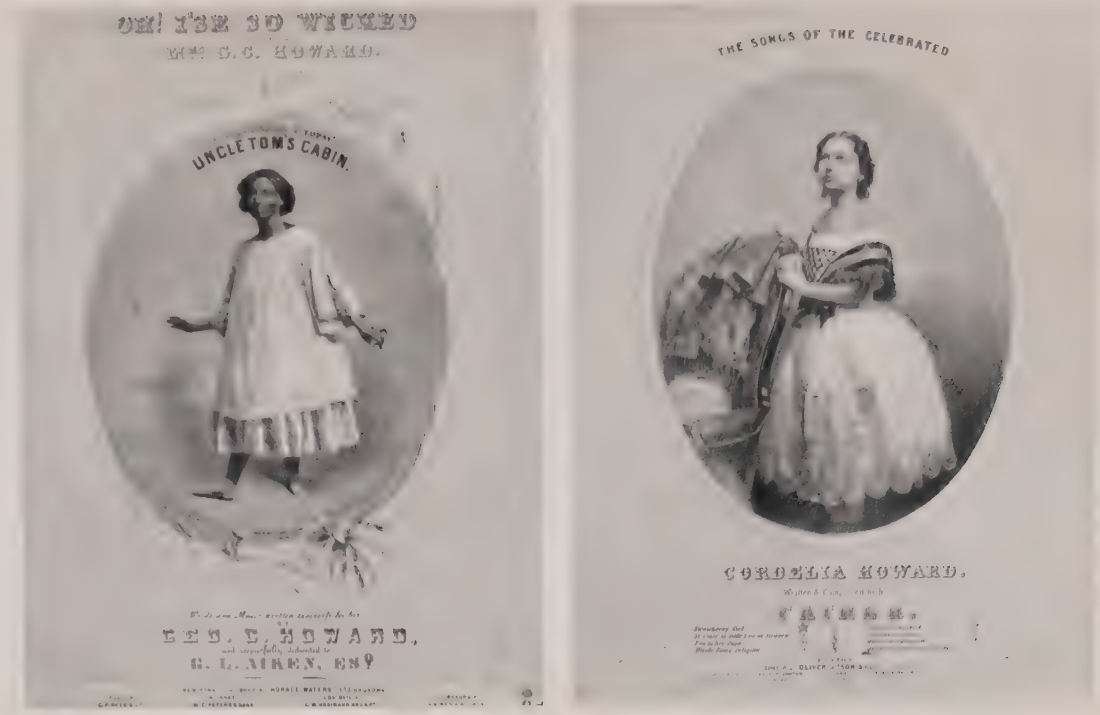
desses dance around, waving wands. Goddess of Liberty and Mars point to clouds. Clouds ascend . . . and draw off . . . and (lights up) the Signers of the Declaration of Independence discovered, Ben Franklin at the head of table. Music changes. Panels in flat above figures open and discover

Tableau

General Washington, Major Putnam, Cadwallader, Greene and American Officers. White fire behind. Clouds descend, etc. Chorus. Clouds ascend and draw off, and the American flag discovered on flat (painted). . . .

In the final scene, the triumph of Washington, as well as of stage management, is when the General enters on horseback! Is there small wonder that such fustian should have trained audiences to expect allegory and spiritual content thus externalized in chromo style? Is it not quite natural that audiences of the fifties should have hung upon the gorgeously tinted clouds and sun effects, as *Little Eva*, robed in white, sent down upon *St. Claire* and *Uncle Tom* a benediction, as she rode the heavenly way upon the back of a "milk-white dove"?

The patriotic portraits of our great men were always highly colored. Into their mouths were put the proper sentiments, but around them was very slight historic atmosphere. Trumbull's "The Death of Nathan Hale" (1842) illustrates the characteristics at their best. But there was another type of play touching on historical events which was not dependent on the martial air: "Witchcraft; or, The Martyrs of Salem", by Cornelius Mathews (1846) and Longfellow's "John Endicott" and "Giles Corey of the Salem Farms." There is in neither of them any of the palpitant atmosphere which Hawthorne's "Twice Told Tales" and "Mosses from an Old Manse" convey; none of the power and effectiveness of MacKaye's "The Scarecrow." But they are an attempt to bring to the drama subject-matter distinctively American. Longfellow shows, in his two plays, no dramatic sense whatever; his action is weighted with extraneous detail, his sentiments are those of the romantic drama of the period. Being a poet, he fell into the snare of using fine spiritual distinctions in his speeches which were intended only for closet reading;



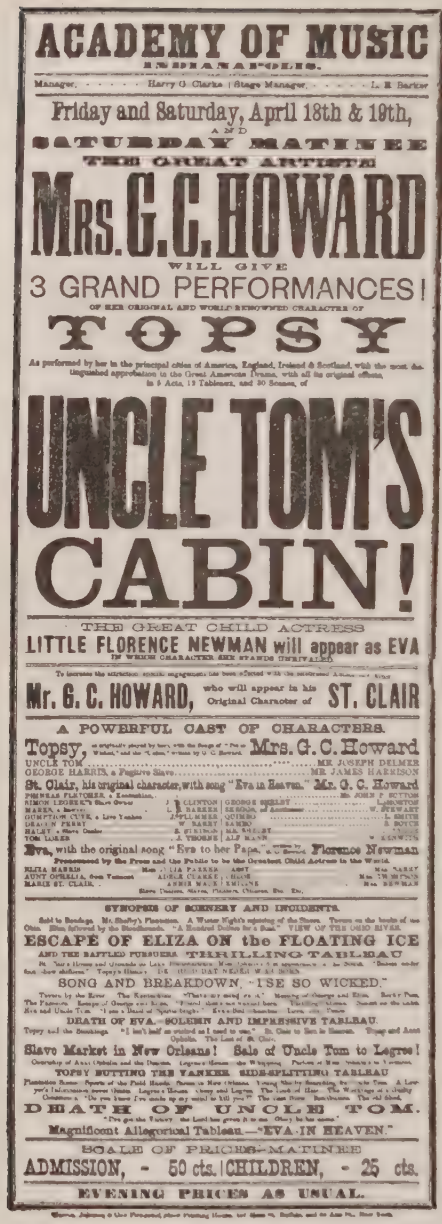
Mrs. G. C. Howard and her Daughter Cordelia
Celebrated as *Topsy* and *Eva* in Aiken's version of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

Reproductions from lithographed music covers, collection of Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

there was little progressive structure to his work, little realization of the value of cumulative interest. Cornelius Mathews knew the theatre more intimately.

History passed through the theatre pictorially, as a pageant, but not with any sense of value for itself alone. It was not until many years after the Civil War that the dramatists dared to write their Union and Confederate plays. But, close upon the War of 1812, coincident with events even, history in the making was celebrated upon the stage, and the scenic artist thrilled his audiences with transparencies. It was not until 1829 that R. P. Smith wrote his "The Eighth of January", and not until 1830 that he did his "The Triumph of Plattsburg." But the list of historical plays, or semi-historical, which has been compiled, indicates that the early dramatist was not unmindful of the contemporary national event. His political characters marked the temper of political parties, as in Heath's "Whigs and Democrats" (1839) and Mathews's "The Politicians" (1840). Mexico figured in many of the contemporary plays and has persisted as a territory with color, even to 1925, when Belasco produced "The Dove", a gringo melodrama which afforded him ample scope for his decorative imagination. In the fifties, Mormonism was one of the big political themes, and Thomas Dunn English's "The Mormons; or, Life at Salt Lake City" (1858) is perhaps more authentic for the student than the later drama by Harriet Ford and Harvey O'Higgins, called "Polygamy" (1914). The theatre fate of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" has been traced in the second volume of my "Representative Plays by American Dramatists", but the significant thing about it was the opposition its use in the theatre called forth from Mrs. Stowe. Her sense of propaganda seems to have been wholly wanting; her sense of morality warped, yet much akin to what the theatre has had to contend with from earliest days. Asa Hutchinson, close upon the publication of the story in 1852, made application to the author to allow him to dramatize it. Her reply was as follows:

I have considered your application and asked advice of my different friends, and the general sentiment of those whom I



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AND THE BAFFLED PURSUERS. THRILLING TABLEAU.
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SONG AND BREAKDOWN, "I SE SO WICKED."
Tavern by the River. The Recognition. "That's my baby, Sir!" Meeting of George and Eliza. Back to Pen. The Fugitives. Escape of George and Eliza. "Forward, boys, and be free!" Thrilling Tableau. Separation on the banks of Eva and Uncle Tom. "I am a Friend of Sparkling Bright." Eva's first Appearance. Eva's Home.
DEATH OF EVA.—SOLEMN AND IMPRESSIVE TABLEAU.
Topsy and the Stockings. "I don't feel as excited as I used to was." St. Clair to Eva in Heaven. Topsy and Aunt Ophelia. The Last of St. Clair.
Slave Market in New Orleans! Sale of Uncle Tom to Legree!
Courtship of Aunt Ophelia and the Dancing Legree's House—the Whipping. Purchase of Eva. "Topsy's no Christian."
TOPSY BUTTING THE YANKEE SIDE-SPLITTING TABLEAU
Plantation Scene—Sports of the Field Hands. Tavern in New Orleans. Young Slaves Scrambling for "the Tom. A Low part of Intercourse across Ohio. Legree's House. Young and Legree. The Look of Hate. The Wrestling at a Nobby Contest. "Do you know I've made up my mind to kill you?" The last Drop. Resolution. The Old Hand.
DEATH OF UNCLE TOM.
"Pray for the Victory, the Lord has given it to me. Glory! he has come."
Magnificent Allegorical Tableau.—"EVA IN HEAVEN."

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have consulted so far agrees with my own, that it would not be advisable to make that use of the work which you propose. It is thought, with the present state of theatrical performances in this country, that any attempt on the part of Christians to identify themselves with them will be productive of danger to the individual character, and to the general cause. If the barrier which now keeps young people of Christian families from theatrical entertainments is once broken down by the introduction of respectable and moral plays, they will then be open to all the temptations of those who are not such, as there will be, as the world now is, five bad plays to one good. However specious may be the idea of reforming dramatic entertainments, I fear it is wholly impracticable, and as a friend to you should hope that you would not run the risk of so dangerous an experiment. The world is not good enough yet for it to succeed.

But, while she stayed the hand of one ambitious playwright, there was no

copyright protection to stay others. It is interesting to realize that from the many thousands of performances of "Uncle Tom's Cabin", neither Mrs. Stowe nor her family enjoyed any of the financial returns. There is a description extant of her attending a theatre, hidden in the shadow of a box, and witnessing the play based on her novel; so deeply moved does she seem to have been that she gave way to the mood of the entertainment completely. Said an eye-witness: "I never saw such delight upon a human face as she displayed when she first comprehended the full power of Mrs. Howard's *Topsy*.",

VI

The Yankee and social types, which have been so conscientiously indicated in the thesis by Professor Reed, may be added to by the local city type so popular in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. The "b'hoys" of the days when Chanfrau and the Bowery Theatre flourished were not so very different from the b'hoys of Harrigan's plays, and *Mose*, who made his appearance in Baker's "A Glance at New York" (1848), was destined to flourish in many companion pieces, going to Philadelphia, to California, even to China; and always being as welcome afresh in a new play as *Dan Mulligan* was in his series. I believe that in many of these local plays the dramatists took pattern from London. Very little stretch of imagination was necessary to put these plays in any locality desired; only a slight change in externals was required. Boucicault's "The Poor of New York" was also known as "The Poor of Liverpool," and "The Streets of London." The fireman, the ragpicker, the fast young man, the seamstress, the dry-goods clerk, the printer — all of them figured as comedy types of city life.

The surprising thing is that the American Theatre should have flourished so generally on such poor material as used to be called into service by the excellent stock companies of the day. There was a run of frontier drama: Simms, Paulding, and others were ready to establish the type; there was quick dramatization of popular stories: Scott, Cooper, and Dickens

became the rage. But somehow there was a dead level in these pieces, which we have to judge as dead level merely because we have not seen them acted with such casts as they had in those days. The Burtons, the Broughams, — in fact, most of the players dwelt upon so lovingly by Laurence Hutton, in his entertaining volume, "Plays and Players", could exalt the flimsiest of dramatic material. Which makes me feel that the palmy days of acting — of which the younger generation never ceases to hear — were the trashy days of drama, except in so far as an actor adhered to the standard plays. You can read any script — separated in subject-matter by many miles of local atmosphere, and you will still obtain a sameness, a close adherence to the same shape of sentiment. Contrast Simms's "Norman Maurice" with Paulding's "The Bucktails; or, Americans in England." They drank from the same sources of the Gothic and romantic. There is a horrible smug security to the "undefiled" American as painted by the dramatists of the time. The Bucktail lads are insufferable. What does *Henry* — one of the Rollo heroes — declare regarding love and the world of temptation? He is talking in the quiet of the evening, when the heart is always ready to become aflame! He says:

'Tis not the light of the moon, the sacred quiet of a calm evening — the repose of a country scene — nor the pure beauties of nature — nor the innocent intercourse of a lonely walk, that inflame the senses, or corrupt the heart. It is at midnight balls and masquerades, where lascivious music assails the senses — where dazzling lights confound the imagination, and wines and costly viands pamper the heated appetites. It is there that virtue melts like wax, and female purity is most successfully assailed.

Later, when this same model youth views the object of his affection near him, he exclaims in an aside, which undoubtedly the shrinking lady must have heard, — "Her sprightliness makes me bold." Simms's "Norman Maurice" is more heroic, it is more eloquent, but it also has about it the same trite eddies of emotion, which characterized much of the liter-

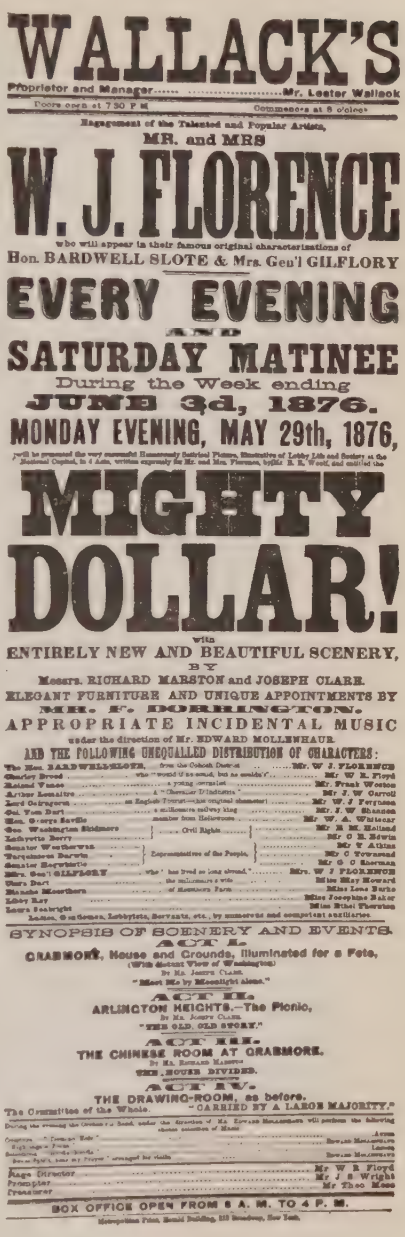
F. S. Chanfrau as *Mose*, a New York Fire Boy, in B. A. Baker's "A Glance at New York."

The b'hoys of the Bowery flourished on such drama.

ature in England and here—naturally here in America, because we were brought up on imitation.

VII

The individual play adds little to the progressive march of either the American Theatre or the American Drama. It is the group element which is alone valuable for the student to follow. For that reason, I am appending tables of plays which will enable the reader to go afield and do further investigation. There are a sufficient number of texts of the old plays available to put any one in possession of the fundamental factors in the drama's history. One of the signs of growth in interest in the subject is the accumulation of collections of plays both in manuscript and in type. The University of Chicago has inherited, through purchase, Doctor F. W. Atkinson's collection of first edition American plays; the New York Public Library is building up rapidly from source material a reference collection of inestimable value; Harvard's



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Lafayette Berry		Mr C E. Edwin
Senator Weatherwax	Representatives of the People,	Mr T Atkins
Tarquinious Darwin		Mr C Townsend
Senator Hogwhistle		Mr G C Sherman
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"Meet Me by Moonlight alone."

ACT II.

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"THE OLD, OLD STORY."

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During the evening the Orchestral Band, under the direction of Mr. Edward Mollenhaur will perform the following choice selection of Music

Overture "Domino Noir"	Auber
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Drama Collection is distinctive. In 1909, I made my first plea for dramatic records to be preserved for the future. I then found that valuable materials were being scattered by indiscriminate purchase in the auction rooms. The situation is now changed. To-day, there are few known dramas in the American field that cannot be secured. There still remain curious gaps in our history. We hear much of W. J. Florence's *Judge Bardwell Slote*, in Benjamin Woolf's "The Mighty Dollar", but even the playwright's family have no record of its existence. We hear of John T. Raymond's *Colonel Mulberry Sellers*, in Mark Twain's "The Gilded Age." But thus far Albert Bigelow Paine has not located the manuscript of the play, over which there had been such dispute between Mr. Clemens and Raymond. I have already noted the absence of a full copy of "Metamora", which a member of the Players Club in New York assures me is in possession of some old actor of his acquaintance. There are texts, I feel certain, in trunks belonging to James K. Hackett, wherein full records of his father's career await his time to collate. But, in the main, the American Drama is in a healthy state of availability for the student. Its value is in the bulk. The individual excellences are minor, if separated from their stage history The truth is, before 1870, the actor was supreme, the dramatist merely an appendage. The consciousness of this fact, I believe, was one of the handicaps under which the playwright worked.

Collection Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

W. J. Florence, as *The Hon. Bardwell Slote*, in Benjamin E. Woolf's "The Mighty Dollar."

CHAPTER SEVEN

And the American Drama Cried, "Ha, ha!" Prize Plays Again, John Howard Payne, Schools of Playwrights, George H. Boker

I

It is to be doubted whether, even if the American dramatist had been free of the theatre tyranny to which the manager, English bred, was subjecting him, he would have created any better than he did. The opposition to originality lay very largely within himself; it was due to his own cultural background. I have already noted that the prejudice against play-acting in this country was not a prejudice against plays but against the theatre and the actor. People were perfectly willing to hail any sort of closet-drama; they were eager to get hold of the printed page. Our tastes were clipped by the Blue Laws which endeavored to create a distrust of all art. There was a distrust of life; always an effort to correct life according to the plan by which we agreed to conduct ourselves spiritually and civically. Our dramatists never attempted, in the main, to reflect the spirit of their own time; but they tried to infuse into a romantic invention some of the oratorical fustian which had a manner, and little else.

Our political independence was about all we had. The strength of our thinking went into keeping us politically independent. Our social problems were fought out on the stump. We could call a man anything under the spell of speech. We could, in our daily life, swear, curse, damn at slaves; but we must be noble in our plays; our passions needs

must be correct; our speech heightened but never irreverent. Referring to a line from a play, "The Maid of Florence; or, A Woman's Vengeance", wherein the heroine, taking poison, dares to exclaim, "O God! O God!", Rees declares: "Our managers have very judiciously omitted in representations all exclamations wherein the name of Deity is used as above. Connected with the most moral of our plays there are incidents and language so foreign from our ideas of God, that His Holy Name so uttered seems, as it were, profane." This is but one of the myriad prescriptions entangling the drama of the period — the eras before 1850.

As much as we might find truth in the fact that foreigners condescended toward the American in those days, we accepted the code of England, and read English fiction, giving but slight encouragement to our own writers. Timidly American humor rose out of the squire tradition of Washington Irving. Longfellow, Lowell, Bayard Taylor preached the foreign culture, and their thoughts were stamped at times with the foreign romance. The devotion to the literature of the England of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was as great as the close adherence of political orators to Roman forensics. Our youth might wear the buckskins of the forest, but their speech, their gesture must have the dignity of the Roman toga.

It is, therefore, a second-hand spirit that pervades the drama of the period. Our writers had been bred on Scott; they had read their Goldsmith; they could quote their Shakespeare; they were of the time and age of Sheridan Knowles, and Bulwer-Lytton. In their moral outlook they were Victorians. As Van Wyck Brooks says, in his "Ordeal of Mark Twain", "Yes, the tragic thing about an environment as coercive as ours is that we are obliged to endow it with the majesty of destiny itself in order to save our own faces! We dwell on the conditions that hamper us, destroy us, we embrace them with an *amor fati*, to escape from the contemplation of our own destruction. . . . We only perceive, we are only mortified by the slavery of men, when nature has endowed us with the true hunger and thirst for freedom." Writing of Whitman, Professor Sherman says, "He lives

because of the richness of his vital reference, the fulness of the relation which he established between his book and the living world." Because of the lack of this live connection, most of our American dramatists of the period we are discussing do not live and are not worthy of living. It is very evident that their plays held their audiences not so much by the force of their content as by the force of their delivery. They were constructed on that scale and according to that pattern.

The efforts of these writers were enlisted in many ways, none more effective than the offering of prizes. Edwin Forrest perhaps paid oftener than the others; but the principle was the same, and as prices went in those days — with the foreign market so cheaply to be had — even the nominal sum of five hundred dollars was more than the playwright would get for a limited number of performances and a benefit to boot. They are worth contemplating, the announcements of some of these competitions, for one is able to estimate the motives behind the offers, one is able to see wherein the actor knows his own qualities and the public's estimate of those qualities. The individuality of the American actor before eighteen-sixty was distinct; each had his own excellence and guarded it with tenacious jealousy. Some even tried to monopolize their "line": Hackett's resentment of "Yankee" Hill's excellence in "way down East" rôles is a typical example. These competitions set the minds of writers in channels of the theatre. Nathaniel P. Willis received his incentive from such an offer, made by James Wallack. But though these prizes brought a response, they did not improve the quality of the product, they did not call forth any original work.

Wallack addressed a letter to the editor of the New York *Mirror*, George P. Morris, stating his needs in the following terms:

Packet Ship *Sheffield*,
May 28th, 1836.

My Dear Sir:

I am most anxious to procure, on my return to the United States, an original play by a native author, and on some striking and powerful American subject. Of course, I am desirous

that the principal character should be made prominent, and adapted to me and my dramatick capabilities, such as they may happen to be. Will you be kind enough to offer for such a production the sum of *one thousand dollars*, which I will pay to any writer who will present the best piece of the description alluded to? All manuscripts will be submitted to a committee of literary gentlemen of your city, and to the author of the play selected by them will be adjudged the premium just specified. Be kind enough to insert the enclosed advertisement in *The Mirror*; and with very many thanks for the kind manner in which you have interested yourself in this matter for me, I am, my dear sir, your obliged and faithful servant,

James Wallack.

The accompanying notice, addressed "To Native Dramatick Authors", called specifically for a subject in American history. There is no full record of the outcome of this offer, but the fact that Wallack later accepted for production Willis's "Tortesa, the Usurer" would lead one to believe that he found in Willis some one who could shape a rôle to his romantic figure. In earlier years he had appeared in J. N. Barker's dramatization of Scott's "Marmion", but that had satisfied his own English taste rather than brought forth any play of American theme.

Previous to this, Yankee Hill had met success in Woodworth's "The Forest Rose", which seems to have established his reputation as a delineator of Yankee character. It was natural that he should try to duplicate his success, and so he offered a prize of four hundred dollars for a dress to fit his peculiarities. Verplanck and Washington Irving were on the committee of judges. Nothing worthy seemed to hit the taste of the moment, and so the money was given, not as a prize, but as a price, to Woodworth, for his "The Foundling of the Sea." Hackett was not idle either, for he encouraged J. K. Paulding to write "The Lion of the West" for him, and accepted, by an anonymous writer, "Moderns, or a Trip to the Springs." This was in 1830, and the conditions were $300 for "an original comedy whereof an American should be the leading character." W. C. Bryant, Halleck, and Prosper

WILLIAM E. BURTON

Collection Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

JOHN BROUGHAM

Collection Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

JAMES H. HACKETT

AMERICAN ACTOR-MANAGERS OF THE FORTIES.

M. Wetmore were the judges. Hackett persuaded Paulding to enter the lists, and it was soon bruited about that David Crockett, who was then in the House of Representatives at Washington, would be the hero. It would seem that the prize play had to be "doctored" by John Augustus Stone. In his preface to "The Bucktails; or, Americans in England", Paulding wrote:

Hitherto the people of the United States have been almost entirely dependent on foreign writers for this, one of the most influential of all the censors of public manners, morals, and tastes, and it seems obvious that the productions of foreigners, adapted to actions in a state of society so widely different from that of our country, can have little application to us, either as republicans or patriots. Like every other people, we require a drama of our own, based on our own manners, habits, character, and political institutions; and such a drama, it seems to us, if sustained with sufficient spirit by American writers, would take root and flourish in the United States.

I find in Rees the mention of a play, "Love's Frailty", written and produced by the Walnut Street Theatre as the result of a prize offered by the management, and this comment is made by the astute "Colley Cibber": "Among the competitors for this prize was John Howard Payne, Esq., and his beautiful play of 'The Italian Bride', for which he at one time refused three hundred dollars, could not obtain the premium of fifty dollars, which was paid for so vile a piece of trash as was ever enacted on the stage. We never heard who the committee were on this occasion."

There are other prize plays to be noted in this period of the drama's history: James H. Kennicott's "Irma; or, The Prediction" (1830), Caroline Lee Hentz's "De Lara; or, The Moorish Bride" (1831), and J. M. Field's "Family Ties" (1846) for Dan Marble. In a sphere of their own, as centering around the dominant personality of an American actor, and as creating a local group which might be designated a "school", are the dramatists called forth by the encouragement of Edwin Forrest.

In his person Forrest epitomized the flare of the American

of the time. He was to the stage what Henry Clay was to the Senate. His voice was the voice of Dickens's American eagle crying "Ha, ha!" The peculiar characteristics demanded by Forrest in the dramas he played were no more imperatively imposed on the dramatists than were the characteristics asked for in the dramas sought by Wallack, Hackett, Marble, and Josephine Clifton (for whom Willis wrote "Bianca Visconti"). But his personal relations with the dramatists stamped his personality still more sharply on their minds. His fiery temper, the quality of his resonant voice, the physical strength of his bearing, required them not to write a part so much as to sculpture it for him. Thus, nine plays were written for him, prizes being given as incentives. These were: "Metamora" and "The Ancient Briton", by Stone; "The Gladiator", "Oralloosa", "Pelopidas", and "The Broker of Bogata", by Robert Montgomery Bird; "Caius Marius", by Richard Penn Smith; "Jack Cade", by Robert T. Conrad; and "Mohammed, the Arabian Prophet" by George H. Miles. The last did not fulfil the terms of the award, and so was accepted merely as the most effective composition received. Alger believes that the result of Forrest's money offers brought to the fore over two hundred manuscripts, most of which luckily rest in oblivion. How did Forrest frame his terms? Here is a note sent to his friend Leggett, who then edited a weekly paper, and who inserted therein the communication.

Dear Sir, — Feeling extremely desirous that dramatic letters should be more cultivated in my native country, and believing that the dearth of writers in that department is rather the result of a want of the proper incentive than of any deficiency of the requisite talents, I should feel greatly obliged to you if you would communicate to the public, in the next number of the "Critic", the following offer. To the author of the best Tragedy, in five acts, of which the hero or principal character shall be an aboriginal of this country, the sum of five hundred dollars, and half of the proceeds of the third representation, with my own gratuitous services on that occasion. The award to be made by a committee of literary and theatrical gentlemen.

Thus, at the theatre birth of John Augustus Stone's "Metamora, or the Last of the Wampanoags", there assisted as a committee of friends, Bryant, Halleck, Lawson, Leggett, Wetmore, and Brooks. I cannot but feel that Forrest was so closely behind these writers of Philadelphia that their plays individualize him rather than the characters they undertake to portray. Read "Jack Cade", and determine whether or not the democracy that flaunts its way into certain lines is not the democracy of Forrest, which rampages through the two padded volumes of his "Life", by Alger. Yet they served him with certain devotion, and were in turn recipients of those surprising evidences of Forrest's thoughtfulness and gentleness and companionableness, — which characteristics were evident in the rare moments of calm the actor had. His life itself was a fit subject for the type of drama written in his period. The violent contrast of manly tears and manly rage, the quick response to grandeur in Nature, the courting of danger for its own sake — all these made of Forrest a much feared and much talked of figure. The American National Drama that he was forever speaking about was the drama which needs must be colored by his own violent emotion, — an art shaped by the mighty art of Forrest, as Conrad said, on the occasion of a public dinner tendered the actor.

Forrest's life was fashioned in melodrama; he viewed everything through the roseate warmth of picturesque situation; he dramatized the facts of his existence. When he first visited Genoa, he found an American ship of war in the bay. He had himself rowed out and asked the commander if he might stand beneath the folds of the flag. Atop the Alps he cried aloud so as to try the volume of his voice. The drama that he wanted must cater to these elements in him. He was as typical of one phase of Americanism as P. T. Barnum was of another.

Here then were other circumstances shaping the profession of the playwright. It was a slim encouragement, for the financial returns, even if the play won a prize, were not sufficient to make the writing of drama any more than a pastime, a gentleman's game in the exercise of letters. Colman, the play

publisher, offered Willis $300 for an edition of "Bianca"; he had offered only $60 to Epes Sargent for an edition of "Velasco." No wonder they made *occasional* flights in the theatre — these writers — and took more seriously their political preferments or editorial duties.

II

John Howard Payne (1791–1852) rose into prominence at the time when the picturesque formal acting of the day held ascendency in the work of Edmund Kean. The very mention of Kean suggests that the American genius, who had won distinction as a youthful actor in his own country, and before the acute prejudice of English theatregoers, was in the main more closely associated with the theatre of London as a playwright than he was with any of his home playhouses. He was involved in the petty jealousies of the patent houses, Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and he found himself much more of a hack writer for them than the average American dramatists felt themselves to be for Simpson or Wallack or others. The injudicious exploiting of him as an infant Roscius — in imitation of Master Betty and Master Burke — destroyed any hope of his advancement as an actor when he grew of age. He had shown his ability as writer and as editor in many juvenalia while in college and after; his mind matured early.

He turned to literature to eke out his small income when, as an actor in London, his éclat subsided. With the result that he was lured — according to the theatre fashion of the day — into ordinary adaptation of French pieces, good, bad, and indifferent, for the managers as they rose and fell, came and went in the London theatre game. He had a host of friends who aided him: Kemble, Campbell, Moore, Coleridge, Southey, Lamb abroad; Charles Brockden Brown and Washington Irving at home; while in the theatre there were many to help him in his early years as an actor. It was the period of his love with Mary Shelley. It was the period of the Siddons, the O'Neil, the Kemble. His name is connected with that

EDWIN FORREST IN THE TITLE RÔLE OF ROBERT T. CONRAD'S "JACK CADE."

"His voice was the voice of Dickens's American eagle crying 'Ha, ha!'"
"Through such a character the democratic spirit breathed in American Drama."

of Lord Byron, when the latter was foremost in theatrical politics. He became a mere tool in the hands of jealous managers, who played him against each other, tossing his manuscripts in ill winds that blew him little good, and subjecting him to the rivalry of smaller workmen.

But Payne had a temper and was possessed of no business acumen; he was of a suspicious nature, and only the sane warning of Washington Irving, who happened to be abroad during Payne's most tumultuous moments, tided him over months of despondency and ill-thinking. The plays by which he is best known were written during his absence abroad. He went to England an actor of youthful renown; he returned to America a bitter man and a disappointed dramatist. "The Maid and the Magpie" had been the first of his French adaptations, soon followed by "Accusation; or, The Family of D'Anglade." The story of the writing of "Brutus" has already been told by me in the introduction to the text of the play, in my "Representative Plays by American Dramatists." Payne felt rightly that his financial returns on this play were not commensurate with its popular drawing power, and he appealed to the Committee in management of the Drury Lane; while they acknowledged the justice of his plaint, they used every theatrical trickery to sidetrack him. He was always being thus sidetracked, even when it came to preparing a play, "Virginius", for the fickle Edmund Kean, who soon thereafter shifted to James Sheridan Knowles, thus leaving Payne in the lurch.

The history of cliques in the British theatre is not our present concern; the existence of them bound and made tragic the dramatic career of Payne. He must have shown himself in many ways obnoxious by his temper; but he had to deal with those who constituted the Macready era of theatre jealousies, and he was never able to outwit them. His venture in managing Sadler's Wells was also an ill-advised attempt. And so, too, did disaster overtake him when he wrote "Thérèse, the Orphan of Geneva", accepted by Elliston, of the Drury Lane; it was not only stolen for the provinces but a new version made by the rival house.

JOHN HOWARD PAYNE (1791–1852)

Full bibliographies in Moses' "Representative Plays", Vol. II; also in "The Cambridge History of American Literature", Vol. I, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917.

Brutus; or, The Fall of Tarquin.	An Historical Tragedy in Five Acts.	London, 1818. New York, 1819.
Accusation; or, The Family of D'Anglade.	A Melodrama in Three Acts.	London, 1817. Boston, 1818.
Thérèse, the Orphan of Geneva.	A Drama in Three Acts.	New York, 1821. London, n.d.
Clari; or, The Maid of Milan.	An Opera in Three Acts.	London, 1823. New York, 1823.
Ali Pacha; or, The Signet-Ring.	A Melodrama in Two Acts.	New York, 1823. London, n.d.
Richelieu.	A Domestic Tragedy founded on Facts in Five Acts.	New York, 1826.
Charles the Second; or, The Merry Monarch.	A Comedy in Two Acts.	London, n.d. New York, 1846.
The Fall of Algiers.	A Comic Opera in Three Acts.	London, n.d. c. 1825.
Writings of John Howard Payne.	By Oscar Wegelin.	*Literary Collector*, March, 1905, 94–100. Bibliography.
Correspondence of Washington Irving and Payne.	Edited by T. T. Payne Luquer.	*Scribner's*, 48: 461–482 (October, 1910)— 48: 597–616 (November, 1910).
When Payne Wrote "Home, Sweet Home."	Letters from Paris, 1822–23. Edited by T. T. Payne Luquer.	*Scribner's*, 58: 742–754 (December, 1915).
John Howard Payne: Dramatist, Poet, Actor.	By Gabriel Harrison.	Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1885.
A History of the American Drama.	By A. H. Quinn.	New York: Harper & Brothers, 1923. Vol. I. Chapter VII.

It does not add to our subject to go further into this matter. Payne continued searching for material in France, despite his many disappointments, and Elliston was succeeded by Charles Kemble, who soon received from Payne a package of manuscripts, which he offered in bulk for about twelve hundred and fifty dollars. Among these was "Clari; or, The Maid of Milan." Another theatre had had the manuscript, and when it was heard that "Clari" was about to be produced — it had originally been called "Angioletta" — a rival production with the old title was hurried up. Payne suffered more than any dramatist of the period from the continual competition which he had to face, because the French sources were not protected by copyright and became any one's property. Even in later years an attempt was made to spirit away from him his right to the song, "Home, Sweet Home", which is now the one spot in "Clari" to keep it alive in memory. The next play was the excellent comedy of "Charles the Second." In his preface to its first edition Payne wrote:

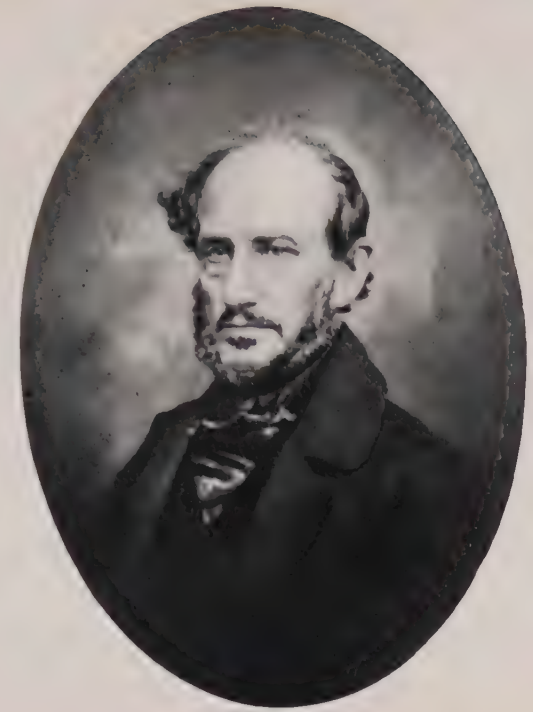
I understand that the authorship of this comedy has been claimed by different persons in the public papers on the ground of their having produced translations of the French original, which has been performed at the minor theatres. In reply to this, I would observe that I have never seen any of these translations. My play was written last autumn at Paris. It was founded on a printed copy of "La Jeunesse de Henri V", of which a number of editions have appeared. The incidents and situations are nearly the same, but the dialogue differs essentially throughout, especially in the part of Captain Copp.

Friendly as he was with Charles Kemble, to whom the piece was dedicated, and who played the title rôle, Payne made little out of the success which attended "Charles the Second." And the hand of Washington Irving played no part in the public attention given it, though his association with it might have done something to outwit the ill-luck which seemed to dog Payne's footsteps. In fact, the two plays which Irving actually did write or rather adapt for the stage: "Abu Hassan", from the German text of Franz Karl Heimer, which Weber had used for his opera; and "The Wild Huntsman",

from "Der Freischütz" — while they were submitted without name to Covent Garden by Payne, according to Mr. G. H. Hellman, the author of "Washington Irving, Esq.", were declined and stored away, to be issued in book form only recently by the Bibliophile Society. But a reading of "Charles the Second" shows a light touch distinctively Irving's, though probably the structure of the piece was abetted by the theatre experience of Payne.

The other play in which the two had a hand was "Richelieu", but, according to Harrison, Payne's biographer, — who never once mentions this collaboration, showing how well the dramatist kept Irving's secret by obliterating all reference to it from his numerous papers, — this new venture was nipped in the bud under the name of "Richelieu" by a descendant of the French Cardinal, who appealed to the Lord Chamberlain's office. It was given with a new name, and certain concessions were made in the text. That Kemble may have known something of Irving's dramatic attempts is suggested by Mr. Hellman's mention that the English actor asked Irving to write a play for him; hence the references in Irving's diary that he wrote feverishly on the script. But the result is lost to view. And there are only notes to indicate that another play was in his mind — "El Embozado" — the Cloaked Figure — a study in dual nature. It can be seen from this latter subject how prone writers were to fall a prey to French melodrama and German sentimentalism. It reveals that not only Payne but Irving had succumbed to the fashions of the time.

Payne was accorded several dramatic benefits on his return to America, after so many years' absence. He accepted them in the spirit that they were only what was due him from the theatre at large, however grateful he might be to the individuals who promoted the enterprises. Such a form of patronage he did not court, but the state of the dramatist's position and the unfortunate state of copyright had made play writing a precarious occupation. To the committee that fostered the benefit in New Orleans he wrote, thanking them for the check of over a thousand dollars. In his communication he said:



JOHN HOWARD PAYNE

WASHINGTON IRVING

"A literary relationship of a very generous nature."

Reproductions from photographs in the collection of Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y

Dramatic authorship in the English language — although the most vexatious, while it is the most widely influential branch of literature — has always been the least protected by the laws both of America and England. The authors of France have a permanent interest in every representation of their plays, and this property descends to their families, — the law obliges theatres to pay them. In England, until very lately, dramatic writers were sustained by no law but that of custom, and custom only entitled them to claim the profits of the third, sixth, ninth, twelfth, twentieth, and fortieth performance of any play from the theatre in which it first appeared, but from no other; and no sooner had it appeared than it was at the mercy of the prompters, who made vast perquisites by supplying early copies to all the provincial theatres of England, and by forwarding them to the managers of this country. . . . At length the subject was brought before the Parliament of England by Mr. Bulwer.

Then he proceeded in the same letter to outline what indignity he had had to go through with managers in America since his return. They did not hide the fact that plays were smuggled over for a nominal bribe; and, even while Payne was abroad, they passed him over for some one not American.

It was after this benefit, in 1835, that Payne's interests were turned elsewhere than the theatre. His concern for the Cherokee Indians recalls Forrest's close companionship with his Choctaw friends near New Orleans. Payne undertook to plead the cause of the Cherokees of Alabama and Georgia. And his tenure of office as Consul at Tunis takes us far afield from the theatre, though its atmosphere is one that would have served well a Knowles or Payne romantic or Gothic drama.

Payne's life was one of violent contrasts: petted and probably spoiled as a boy by over-adulation; serving twice in prison — once because he arrived in England at the outset of the War of 1812, and again because of debt. The hectic close of his career, and the lapse of time before his body was brought back from Tunis to this country, rounded out a life of sixty-one years, mostly of anxiety and travail. He had a brilliantly constituted mind, — one ripe for development in the

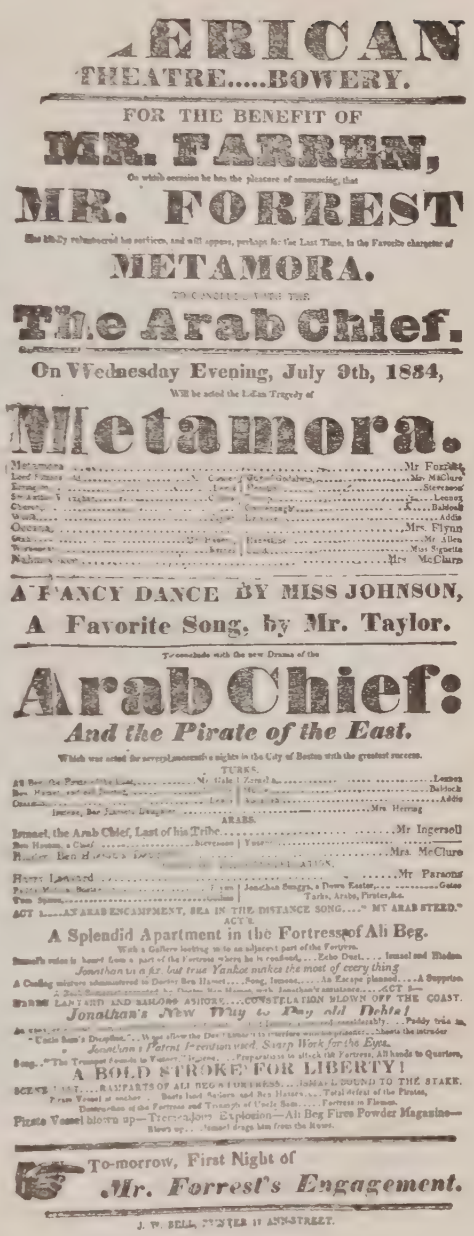
interests of the theatre; he was an excellent critic; he knew the fundamentals of acting well, having sat at the knee of Thomas A. Cooper, as a boy, and watched closely and talked long with Talma. His name figures in the history of periodical literature both as editor and contributor. His story has yet to be fully told. His correspondence has not been more than touched by his grandnephew, Thayer T. Payne Luquer, in a series of fascinating papers. For the period of the English theatre in which he flourished was one of England's interesting literary periods, and Payne's intimacy with men of such differing personalities as Lamb and Macready, Bulwer and Coleridge, is but barely dwelt upon in Harrison.

The majority of Payne's dramas need not detain the student long. Some of them are still in manuscript; others in editions not easily available. His best products, "Brutus" and "Charles the Second", are reprinted. These show him to have had a facility in the handling of tragedy and comedy, the latter aided by Irving. Of this association with Irving more needs to be written, for it illustrates a literary relationship of a very generous nature. It means something for a dramatist to hold his own in any field he deems might bring benefit to the theatres he represents. For Payne was really a house dramatist, ready to draw to London what he deemed would be of commercial worth. Recall that he could turn his hand to an opera like "Clari" and a melodrama like "Thérèse." The romantic and the heroic were his forte. But his contributions, save in the way in which he handled his dialogue, and the freedom he gave to expression, were second-hand mostly, and were created for the theatre. I believe that "Brutus" would still hold an audience, if there was an actor of sufficient forcefulness to drown some of the heroic sentiments of the characters, and some of the sentimental hysterics of the heroine. "Charles the Second" has spirit, but what detracts from its value is that it is a romance, where poetry and historic truth are subservient to adventure, rather than a realistically historical document. But Payne, in the theatre, was a victim of condition: a condition which was only one of the many causes for the elimination of the American play-

wright as a literary force, a force for all time in any theatre.

III

It is not fair to blame Edwin Forrest for all the shortcomings of the dramatists he encouraged by his various prizes; rather should we praise him for the variety of the material he accepted, and then look for the causes of the weakness in such drama. Forrest was a dominating figure; no wonder the writers of the time tried to sue for his favor. John Howard Payne, so Harrison indicates, on his return to America, sent to Forrest his play of "Romulus", which so pleased the actor that requests were made for certain changes preparatory to production. But the changes were not made and the drama remains in manuscript. "Brutus" was of the Forrest proportion, and so too, thought Payne, would have been his



...ERICAN
THEATRE.....BOWERY.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF

MR. FARREN,

On which occasion he has the pleasure of announcing, that

MR. FORREST

Who kindly relinquished his services, and will appear, perhaps for the Last Time, in the Favorite character of

METAMORA.

TO CONCLUDE WITH THE

The Arab Chief.

On Wednesday Evening, July 9th, 1834,

Will be acted the Indian Tragedy of

Metamora.

Metamora ..... Mr Forrest
Lord Fitzroy ..... Mr McClure
Metamora ..... Mrs Flynn
Nahmeokee ..... Mrs McClure

A FANCY DANCE BY MISS JOHNSON,

A Favorite Song, by Mr. Taylor.

To conclude with the new Drama of the

Arab Chief:

And the Pirate of the East.

Which was acted for several successive nights in the City of Boston with the greatest success.

TURKS.

Ali Beg, the Pirate of the East ..... Mr Vale | Zemail ..... Lenox
Ben Hassan, an old Sentinel ..... Bullock
Osmanlee ..... Addis

ARABS.

Ismael, the Arab Chief, Last of his Tribe ..... Mr Ingersoll
Ben Hassan, a Chief ..... Mrs McClure
Haroun Ben Hassan's Daughter ..... Mrs Herring

CHRISTIANS.

Henry Leonard ..... Mr Parsons
Peter Wilkins, Surgeon ..... Gates
Tom Spunk ..... Tayle, Archy, Pirates, &c.

ACT I.—AN ARAB ENCAMPMENT, SEA IN THE DISTANCE SONG.... "MY ARAB STEED."

ACT II.

A Splendid Apartment in the Fortress of Ali Beg.

With a Gallery looking into an adjacent part of the Fortress.

Smooth seas is heard from a part of the Fortress where he is confined,... Echo Duet.... Ismael and Haroun

Jonathan is a sly, but true Yankee makes the most of every thing

A Cooling mixture administered to Doctor Ben Hassan,... Song, Impromptu.... An Escape planned.... A Surprise

A Duel Summoned accepted by Doctor Ben Hassan, with Jonathan's assistance.... ACT II.

BARBARY LAND AND BARLOWS ASHORE.... CONSTELLATION BLOWN OFF THE COAST.

Jonathan's New Way to Pay old Debts!

An attempt at Escape discovered,... Ismael surrounded considerably... Paddy tries to

"Uncle Sam's Daughter."... Who allow the Doctor's assistance to overthrow even his grandeur... Shoots the intruder

Jonathan's Patent Invention used. Sharp Work for the Eyes.

Song..."The Trumpet sounds to Victory." Preparations to attack the Fortress, Alhambra to Quarters,

A BOLD STROKE FOR LIBERTY!

SCENE LAST.... RAMPARTS OF ALI BEG'S FORTRESS.... ISMAEL BOUND TO THE STAKE.

From Vessel at anchor.... Boats load Sailors and Sea Horses.... Total defeat of the Pirates,

Destruction of the Fortress and Treasure of Uncle Sam..... Fortress in Flames.

Pirate Vessel blown up—Tremendous Explosion—Ali Beg Fires Powder Magazine—

Blows up... Ismael drags him from the Room.

To-morrow, First Night of

Mr. Forrest's Engagement.

J. W. BELL, PRINTER 11 ANN-STREET.

"Virginius", which Kean had rejected in favor of Knowles. In no instance did Forrest dictate his subject-matter unless it was in the case of "Metamora", where he wished for an opportunity of putting into visible picture some of the character study he had made personally among his Indian friends near New Orleans. When one looks over the range of the plays done by the Philadelphia School — barring Boker, who did not write for Forrest — it represents the cultural interest of the men who wrote them. The friendship which existed between Forrest and Bird most certainly colored the latter's desire to meet the actor's requirements. They must have talked over "The Broker of Bogata" and "Oralloosa", when they travelled together in Mexico, and Forrest profited much by Bird's knowledge of Spanish. "Oralloosa" was calculated to fit him in the volume of its passion, in the expansiveness of its picturesque situations. The great differences in these dramas lay in their subject-matter, not in their form or their sentiment. In each, the flights of passion are the same, the sentiments are of like proportion. These men were between two extremes of the time: the drama of the theatre and the closet-drama, which was to be read rather than spoken. They were imitative, as John Howard Payne was imitative in "Brutus; or, the Fall of Tarquin" (1818). The old English drama was the model, while Italy, Spain, or Germany appeared to be the locality. In choice of subject alone, these literary aspirants of the drama exhibited their preconceived notions as to tragedy. The Southerners who wrote dramas knew nothing outside of foreign realms. A. J. Requier became author of "The Spanish Exile" (1842); George Henry Miles wrote "Mohammed" (1850), "De Soto" (1853), and "Señor Valiente" (1858); Caroline Lee Hentz published her tragedy, "De Lara; or, The Moorish Bride" (1843); Isaac Harby, within the classic tradition and Kotzebue influence, wrote "Alexander Severus" (1807) and "Alberti" (1819).

What Professor Matthews says of England may very well be said of America: that its "literature is strewed with wrecked tragedies, lofty enough in aspiration, but pitifully lacking in imagination."

Collection Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

NATHANIEL P. WILLIS

Collection Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

ANNA CORA MOWATT

KNICKERBOCKER CONTEMPORARIES

KNICKERBOCKER SCHOOL OF PLAYWRIGHTS

Important plays indicated

Samuel Woodworth (1785–1842)	*a*. The Deed of Gift. Boston, March 25, 1822. *b*. The Forest Rose; or, American Farmers. New York Chatham Theatre, October 6, 1825.	Consult O. S. Coad in *Sewanee Review*, June, 1919, 163–175.
Nathaniel P. Willis (1806–1867)	*a*. Bianca. New York Park Theatre, August 25, 1837. *b*. Tortesa, the Usurer. New York National, April 8, 1839.	Consult biography by H. A. Beers, *American Men of Letters Series;* Moses' Representative Plays, Vol. II.
Cornelius Mathews (1817–1889)	*a*. The Politicians. New York, 1840. *b*. Witchcraft; or, The Martyrs of Salem. New York Bowery Theatre, May 17, 1847.	Consult Duyckinck; *American Art Journal*, March 30, 1889; *Dramatic Mirror*, April 6, 1889. Figured in copyright history.
Anna Cora Mowatt (1819–1870)	*a*. Fashion. New York Park Theatre, March 24, 1845. *b*. Armand; or, The Peer and the Peasant. New York Park Theatre, September 27, 1847.	Consult A. C. Mowatt's Autobiography of an Actress; bibliography in Moses' Representative Plays, Vol. II. Play revived during season of 1923–24, by the Provincetown Playhouse, New York. See Poe critiques.
Epes Sargent (1814–1880)	*a*. Velasco. Boston Tremont Theatre, November 20, 1837.	Consult Poe's Literati; Duyckinck; Allibone; also history of Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion."

The Knickerbocker, the New England, the Philadelphia, and the Southern schools, therefore, held the same notions regarding the drama as a readable and as an actable medium. The literary man's attitude toward the theatre was that of the *dilettante;* it was amateurish, though there was a sincere desire on his part to excel in the art. But the *littérateur* had a mistaken notion as to the province of the theatre, and he was not willing to serve apprenticeship. Besides which, in his choice of subject, he was prompted by the old-fashioned broadness of acting, and he wrote romantic melodrama — romantic in a sort of external psychology, but statuesque in action. That notion of the heroic persisted for many years.

It is false, however, to separate literature and drama. While it is legitimate to accept the closet-drama as a form in itself, it is not legitimate to consider it as in any way necessary to the theatre. It is a hybrid type which Professor Matthews rightly notes appeared and appears only at times when literature and the theatre are divorced.[1] Every poet who has written a play has intended it for the stage, but he has approached his task wrongly. And so we begin to realize the hopelessness of claiming the closet-drama as part of the strength of the theatre, when we read H. A. Beers' opinion of it:

> [The closet-dramatist] need not sacrifice truth of character and probability of plot to the need of highly accentuated situations. He does not have to consider whether a speech is too long, too ornate in diction, too deeply thoughtful for recitation by an actor. If the action lags at certain points, let it lag. In short, as the aim of the closet-dramatist is other than the playwright's, so his methods may be independent.

This statement gives a false impression of the relation between literature and drama; one is a principle of thought and expression; the other is a form of thought and expression. To deny that drama cannot come within the category of literature is to deny that drama may ever have a claim to

[1] See "The Legitimacy of the Closet-Drama." Brander Matthews. *Scribner's*, February, 1908.

permanence. True literature is unconscious excellence. Shakespeare wrote plays rather than poetry, yet the poetry in them preserves them, and they live because, though the action is generally conventional, the spiritual quality and the mental value are there without hurting the movement of the whole. Modern drama, alone, refutes the claim that closet-plays are closet-plays simply because they aim to be literature. Effective stage pieces, as a rule, have not been pleasing to read, but that is the fault of the literary sense of the author who has aimed for appreciation through outward theatrical effect.

There are two sentences in Professor Matthews's "The Literary Merit of Our Latter-day Drama" [1] which point to cardinal weaknesses in the closet-drama. He claims that "a dramatist who fails to please the play-going public of his own time will never have another chance", and again he writes that "style is the great antiseptic, no doubt, but style cannot bestow life on the still-born." In both of these respects, closet-dramas have failed, and, therefore, as a stage consideration, they exert no influence. Managers lose whenever they mount such plays, for usually literature of this kind cares nothing for the practical demands of technique or of stage accessory. If it is not a drama of ideas, it is a drama of imagery; it is discursive rather than concentrated; it is slow-moving rather than active; it is poetic rather than dramatic.

Longfellow, after seeing "The Vicar of Wakefield" in dramatization, was convinced of the superiority of dramatic representation over narrative. But, on the other hand, he was never keenly alive to the actions and reactions of life, which manifest themselves in active situations rather than in pictures. This is distinctly apparent in his "John Endicott" and "Giles Corey of the Salem Farms." We find him, therefore, writing as early as 1845: "Felt more than ever to-day the difference between my ideal home-world of Poetry, and the outer, actual, tangible Prose-world. When I go out of the precincts of my study, down the village street to college, how the scaffolding about the Palace of Song comes rattling and

[1] See "Inquiries and Opinions."

clattering down." "The Spanish Student" (1843) and the "Tragedies" failed to find their way to the stage.

In other words, the closet-dramatist has suffered because he has been too contemplative on one hand, and because, on the other, he has placed too much attention upon ornamentation. W. D. Howells and Henry James reduced the oratorical to terms of modern prose rhythm, and in their dialogues they came very near the requirements of the stage, but their outlook upon life was a narrative one. James's dialogue was too "fat" with matter.

Henry Arthur Jones has always been a great believer in the literary value of modern drama, upholding the idea that, if a play is truly alive, it must be literature. And his belief finds full expression in the following:

> If you have faithfully and searchingly studied your fellow-citizens; if you have selected from amongst them those characters that are interesting in themselves, and that also possess an enduring human interest; if, in studying these interesting personalities, you have severely selected, from the mass of their sayings and doings and impulses, those words and deeds and tendencies which mark them at once as individuals and as types; if you have then recast and re-imagined all the materials; if you have cunningly shaped them into a story of progressive and accumulative action; if you have done all this, though you may not have used a single word but what is spoken in ordinary American intercourse to-day, I will venture to say that you have written a piece of live American literature.

In that respect the Philadelphia School of playwrights did not attempt to create a live drama, for they courted plots and phrases of a gone era; their imagery was cast in the Elizabethan mold, and their ear caught the Elizabethan accent. Such an excellent piece of stagecraft as Boker's "Francesca da Rimini" is riddled with mere paraphrases from the dramatist he loved so well, — Shakespeare. These men all brought the student's enthusiasm to their work. Look at the amount of book atmosphere there is in all their plays. Payne was con-

Richard Penn Smith

Robert T. Conrad

Philadelphia Playwrights who wrote under the spell of Edwin Forrest

tinually verifying his sources, and he knew his periods down to the veriest detail. Note Conrad's long introduction to "Jack Cade." One only has to read Boker's "Anne Boleyn" to see how his English history was at his finger tips. Their effects were definitely laid on according to a model: they were poets painting in words. But their colors all seem to be second-hand.

The theatre used the literary men of the day in other ways. They were awarded prizes for dedicatory poems, they were invited to be poet laureates for occasions; and so Robert Treat Paine (who was of Payne's family), Washington Irving, Fitz-Greene Halleck, and Oliver Wendell Holmes are figured on many programs. But somewhere they possessed a hidden contempt for the theatre, and were not tempted to subject themselves to its demands. They were enthusiastic theatre-goers, and basked in the sunshine of celebrities of the stage. But that is all. Even Irving hid his name as an aspirant.

IV

Philadelphia's honorable claim in the history of the American Theatre stands high; the same must be said for it in the history of the American Drama. Thomas Godfrey, Francis Hopkinson, John Leacock, and J. N. Barker were citizens of the town. The Philadelphia School swells the list still more. And to these may be added the name of David Paul Brown, (1795–1875), author of "Sertorius." These men were not of the theatre, nor did they devote their fullest and freshest energies to the theatre; play writing was a transient occupation with them. Brown had a long legal career, and he did not wish to have his professional position handicapped by these side thrusts into art. He dashed off his "Sertorius" in two weeks, and his study was on horseback, as he rode to and from Yellow Springs, the popular Pennsylvania spa of the day. As a lawyer he could feel the manner of the actor — the manner of Junius Brutus Booth, who played his piece. It was a forensic ability which he himself possessed. He wrote to a correspondent:

PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL OF PLAYWRIGHTS

With their chief plays noted

John Augustus Stone (1801–1834)	*a.* Metamora. Philadelphia Arch Street Theatre, January 22, 1830.	Consult Rees, James. The Dramatic Authors of America. Philadelphia, G. B. Zieber & Co. 1845.
Robert T. Conrad (1810–1858)	*a.* Jack Cade. New York Park Theatre, May 24, 1841.	Consult Allibone, Brown, Duyckinck, Wegelin, Rees' "Forrest", Phelps' Players of a Century. See Moses' Representative Plays by American Dramatists, Vol. II, for text of play.
Robert Montgomery Bird (1806–1854)	*a.* The Gladiator. New York Park Theatre, September 26, 1831. *b.* The Broker of Bogota. New York Bowery Theatre, February 12, 1834.	Consult Foust, Clement E., Life and Dramatic Works of Bird. 1919. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania. Bibliography, 161–167. Manuscripts in the University of Pennsylvania. See *Old Penn Weekly Review*, Philadelphia, March 18, 1916.
Richard Penn Smith (1799–1854)	*a.* The Eighth of January. Philadelphia Chestnut Street Theatre, January 8, 1829. *b.* The Triumph of Plattsburg. Philadelphia Chestnut Street Theatre, January 8, 1830.	Consult *American Quarterly Review*, 1830, 8: 134, September. The Life and Writings of Smith, by Bruce Walker McCullough. University of Pennsylvania Thesis, 1917.

PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL OF PLAYWRIGHTS. *Continued*		
		Rees, James. The Dramatic Authors of America. Philadelphia: G. B. Zieber & Co. 1845. Some of Smith's MSS. in Penn. Historical Society.
George H. Miles (1824–1871)	*a.* Mohammed. New York, October 27, 1851. *b.* De Soto. Philadelphia Chestnut Street Theatre, April 19, 1852.	

Dear Sir: — I received your kind letter, dated the first of this month, and hasten to reply. I am, perhaps, unlike most dramatic writers of the present, or any other, day — for, although neither of my dramas has met with much success, I think both have met with more than they were entitled to. This impression of mine may be ascribable to my utter indifference to their fate. They were written rather as matters of relief from the cares and toils of an arduous profession, than with any view to their representation upon the stage. And if I may speak frankly, I must say, they derived greater celebrity from their author, than their author will ever derive from them. In other words, it was not so remarkable that, with vast professional engagements, I should have written two bad plays, as that I should have been able to write any at all. "Sertorius" has been performed nine times, and, with the aid of Mr. Booth, was well received. "The Prophet of St. Paul's" has been thrice performed, and, by the aid of good luck, has not yet been *damned;* but, for my own part, I should be unwilling to run so narrow a chance. In the worst possible result, however, I should have been totally unaffected, as I confess to you; although I have much pleasure in the composition of such matters, I have no interest in their fate. I am an advocate, not a dramatist. . . .

He had upon him the fever of the closet-drama; versed in the classics, yet, as James K. Paulding declared when he reviewed "Sertorius", he did not have a correct understanding of or a sensitive ear for the Elizabethan poetry he sought to copy.

Forrest's attitude toward the dramas he fostered, however, was of a different nature. His response to material he thought would fit him must have inspired the playwrights to further effort. Writing to Bird at one time, he exclaimed, "'The Broker of Bogata' will live when our vile trunks are rotten." But he little knew, when he passed from the scene, and his disciples in the art of acting had been replaced, how quickly those plays would fall into disuse. Bird (1806–1854) was a physician, practising literature as a side issue. Conrad (1810–1858) was in politics, and had been one-time mayor of Philadelphia. I find Bird's biographer, Doctor Foust, extracting from the Bird manuscripts in the University of Pennsylvania this exposition of his technical ideas, which reveals how well he had studied Forrest's requirements. He writes:

> The true secret of effect consists in having everything, as well in details as in the general structure, *Epigrammatic or Climactic;* the story rising to rapidity and closing with power; the chief characters increasing in passion and energy; the events growing in interest, the scenes and acts each accumulating power above their precursers; the strength of a speech augmenting, at its close, and the important characters dismissed at each exit with some sort of point and emphasis. He will ascertain that interest cannot be preserved if it be distracted; and that to have his play truly dramatic (in opposition to epic) the interest and importance must be concentrated in the hero — and that every event, character, or speech which does not serve to increase our interest in this personage, is superfluous and therefore, detrimental.

But Bird fell away from the drama, and so did Conrad. Stone was of the theatre and imitated the classic drama as well as the French melodrama. The lives of these men do not particularly bear upon their theatre work; their plays were products of their reading and were regulated by the fashions

of the theatre. Richard Penn Smith (1799–1854), grandson of the famous Provost of the College of Philadelphia, and winner of a prize with "Caius Marius" (1831), was a rapid worker, and his attempts in the closet-drama were not as telling as his historical dramas. That the Philadelphia style for Forrest was being watched elsewhere is seen by the fact that the winner of another prize, George H. Miles, author of "Mohammed, the Arabian Prophet", was a Marylander.

V

The one outstanding figure of the group was George Henry Boker (1823–1890), a man of leisure, a scholar, and one whose culture was more exact and polished than his passion was spontaneous. Hans Breitmann (C. G. Leland) speaks of Boker's boyhood, when he manifested such remarkable poetic talents that Forrest, in a flood of enthusiasm, exclaimed that he was the best reader in America. At Princeton, Boker gratified every artistic taste, and gathered in his room those students whose interest was distinctly literary.

He then studied law, and travelled abroad until 1847. As early as this, Bayard Taylor recognized in him a close and sympathetic friend. The two of them, with Richard Henry Stoddard, formed a sympathetic association, wherein they sustained themselves in their struggles against the apathetic interest America took in her literary progeny. Their relations recall the deep bond which existed between John Howard Payne and Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Irving and Samuel Woodworth. In the years following 1847, Boker wrote assiduously; he was independent of financial dependence and so could take, unperturbed, the slow measure of reward meted out to him; though it will be found that he had the same trouble with the finances of the theatre that Bird had, the latter discovering in the end that Forrest, devoted as he might be to the cause of a National Drama, was careful to direct the bulk of the pecuniary gain in his direction. When Stone committed suicide, it was Forrest who went to the rescue with a flood of sentiment. But evidently "Meta-

GEORGE HENRY BOKER (1823–1890)

For full bibliography, see Moses' "Representative Plays", Vol. III.

Calaynos.	London, Sadler's Wells Theatre, May 10, 1849.	Philadelphia: Walnut Street Theatre, January 20, 1850.
Anne Boleyn (1850).	—	—
The Betrothal.	Philadelphia: Walnut Street Theatre, September 25, 1850.	New York: Broadway Theatre, November 18, 1850.
Leonor de Guzman.	Philadelphia: Walnut Street Theatre, October 3, 1853.	New York: Broadway Theatre, April 24, 1853.
Francesca da Rimini.	New York: Broadway Theatre, September 26, 1855.	
Boker.	By J. W. Krutch.	*Sewanee Review*, October, 1917, 25: 457–468.
Cambridge History of American Literature.	New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917.	Bibliography, 1: 494.
Reminiscences of George Henry Boker.	By Charles Godfrey Leland.	*The American*, 1890, March 1, 19: 392–394.
George Henry Boker.	By Charles Godfrey Leland.	*Sartain's Magazine*, 1851, 8: 369–378.
George Henry Boker.	By George Parsons Lathrop.	Authors at Home. xxvii. *Critic*, n. s. Vol. 9, April 14, 1888.
The Dramas of George Henry Boker.	By A. H. Quinn.	*Publication of Modern Language Association of America*, Vol. 32, no. 2, n. s. Vol. 25, June, 1917, 233–266.
Recollections of George Henry Boker.	By Richard Henry Stoddard.	*Lippincott*, June, 1890, 45: 856–867.

mora", while it brought the actor fame, did not bring the dramatist profit.

Boker's devotion to the Union cause during the Civil War is seen in the numberless "Poems of the War" which came from his pen. In 1871, he began his diplomatic service, being sent by President Grant to Constantinople. He was transferred, in 1875, to St. Petersburg, where he gained much popularity during a two years' service.

All this time, his poetic talents were variously directed toward the stage. He was the author of "Calaynos", a tragedy given at Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, the year after its publication in 1848. "Francesca da Rimini" (1853) is his most famous piece, and is most deserving of consideration in a theatrical sense. Boker's art temperament is well measured in the following from the pen of Richard Henry Stoddard:

> There was no such word as fail in his bright lexicon, wherein failure was hammered into success. I was not surprised to learn therefore [March, 1853] . . . that he had a new tragedy on the anvil. "You will laugh at this," he wrote, "but the thing is so; 'Francesca da Rimini' is the title. Of course you know the story — every one does; but you, nor any one else, do not know it as I have treated it. I have great faith in the successful issue of this new attempt. I think all day, and write all night. This is one of my peculiarities, by the bye: a subject seizes me, soul and body, which accounts for the rapidity of my execution. My muse resembles a whirlwind: she catches me up, hurries me along, and drops me all breathless at the end of her career." The great heat at which "Lear" and "Julius Cæsar" were probably written, at which we know "The Prisoner of Chillon" was written, at which "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon" is said to have been written, were inherent in the dramatic genius of Boker, from whom, at the end of nineteen days, I received another letter, which I found very interesting: "Now that 'Francesca da Rimini' is done, all but the polishing, I have time to look around and see how I have been neglecting my friends during my state of possession. Of course you wish to know my opinion of the bantling: I shall suppose you do, at all events. Well, then, I am better satis-

fied with 'Francesca da Rimini' than with any of my previous plays. It is impossible for me to say what you, or the world, will say of it; but if it do not please you both, I do not know what I am about. The play is more dramatic than former ones, fiercer in its displays of intense passions, and, so far as mere poetry goes, not inferior, if not superior, to any of them. In this play I have dared more, risked more, than I ever had courage to do before. *Ergo*, if it be not a great triumph, it will certainly be a great failure. I doubt whether you in a hundred guesses could hit upon the manner in which I have treated the story. I shall not attempt to prejudice you regarding the play; I would rather have you judge for yourself, even if your decision be adverse. Am I not the devil and all for rapid composition? My speed frightens me, and makes me fearful of the merits of my work. Yet, on coolly going over my work, I find little to object to, either as to the main design or its details; I touch up, here and there, but I do little more. The reason for my rapid writing is that I never attempt putting pen to paper before my design is perfectly matured. I never start with one idea, trusting to the glow of poetical composition for the remainder. That will do in lyrical poetry, but it would be death and damnation to dramatic. But just think of it! — Twenty-eight hundred lines in about three weeks! To look back upon such labor is appalling! Let me give you the whole history of my manner of composition in a few words. If it be not interesting to you, you differ from me, and I mistake the kind of matters that interest you. While I am writing, I eat little, I drink nothing, I meditate my work, literally, all day. By the time night arrives, I am in a highly nervous and excited state. About nine o'clock, I begin writing and smoking, and I continue the two exercises, *pari passu*, until about four o'clock in the morning. Then I reel to bed, half-crazy with cigar-smoke and poesy, sleep five hours, and begin the next day as the former. Ordinarily, I sleep from seven to eight hours, but when I am writing, but five, — simply because I cannot sleep any longer at such times. The consequence of this mode of life is, that at the end of a long work I sink at once like a spent horse, and have not energy enough to perform the ordinary duties of life. I *feel* my health giving way under it, but really I do not care. I am ambitious to be numbered among the martyrs.

Loyal as Stoddard was to his friend, we find him writing in this critical vein:

The conception of his tragedies and comedies, their development, their movement, and their catastrophes, are dramatic. Poetical, they are not overweighted with poetry; emotional and passionate, their language is naturally figurative, and the blank verse rises and falls as the occasion demands. One feels in reading them that the writer had studied the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, and that they harmed as well as helped him. If he could have forgotten them and remembered only his own genius, his work would have been more original. A born dramatist, he was a genuine balladist, as I could prove by comparing his ballads with those of Macaulay; and a born sonneteer, as I could prove by comparing his sonnets with those of Sidney, Spenser, Daniel, and Shakespeare.

It is useless to call attention too specifically to the excellences and faults in Boker's dramatic workmanship. His lines are easy to read, imitative of Elizabethan blank verse. His plays are not individualistic, though one might detect in the speeches of *Queen Anne*, in "Anne Boleyn", certain personal comment on the ways of the English. Reading "Calaynos", the difference between this and Bird's "The Broker of Bogata" is one of degree rather than of kind. There is a sameness to his plays: a repetition of motive, passion, and simile that palls. Yet, were his plays strong enough to survive the change in taste, were his stories of sufficient interest and not merely a pale reflection of out-of-the-way legend and history, — were actors to be found to brave the production of them, they would be found to "work" well, in the mechanical theatre sense. Of all the Francesca plays, the one of Boker's seems to articulate most practically for stage production, though the Italian passion of it is sadly wanting. Compare the plot situations in "Calaynos", in "Anne Boleyn", and in "Francesca da Rimini", and it will be detected that Boker had his formal blue print of stage requirement. But he never was of the theatre; his position in literature was too firm, his occupations in other directions too scattered to consider him as distinctly an American dramatist. He was

a later product of the Philadelphia school; and the war, together with his diplomatic position, withdrew him eventually from the stage scene, save for later negotiations with Lawrence Barrett.

In my "Representative Plays by American Dramatists" I have reprinted "Francesca da Rimini." There I have detailed Boker's activity in my introduction. It illustrates how nearly he was to being a closet-dramatist; it shows how earnest he was as a poet. But it likewise suggests that there was absent in Boker's mind what the theatre really meant as an important institution. Writing was to him, as it was to the entire Philadelphia group, a grace rather than an earnest accomplishment. Yet he too tried to determine to himself what there was in dramatic technique that differed from other forms. He wrote to Richard Henry Stoddard, on October 6, 1850:

Seriously, Dick, there is, to my mind, no English diction for your purposes equal to Milton's in his minor poems. Of course any man would be an intensified ass who should attempt to reach the diction of the "Paradise Lost", or aspire to the tremendous style of Shakespeare. You must not confound things, though. A Lyric diction is one thing — a Dramatic diction is another, requiring the utmost force and conciseness of expression, — and Epic diction is still another; I conceive it to be something between the Lyric and Dramatic, with all the luxuriance of the former and all the power of the latter.

The awful thing to Boker was that the toil of literature was not recompensed by the public; they regarded the occupation as a fancy matter. Again he wrote to Stoddard:

Were poetry forged upon an anvil, cut out with the axe, or spun in the mill, my heaven, how men would wonder at the process! What power, what toil, what ingenuity!

He little stopped to think that maybe the writers were not watchers of popular interest, were not themselves interested in subjects of wide appeal. After he had finished "Leonor de Guzman", Boker wrote Stoddard: "There are no such

subjects for historical tragedy on earth as are to be found in the Spanish history of that period [meaning the reigns of Alfonso XII, of Castile, and his son, Peter the Cruel]." There was no theme in American history which, to those men who had a fixed mind as to what should be the color of historical tragedy, seemed important enough for their consideration. That was one of the reasons which kept the drama of the period so aloof from the sympathy of the masses. Rees seemed to blame the decadent taste of theatregoers for the non-acceptance of Conrad. But the attempt to put a play on, in the hope that an actor like Booth or Forrest would overcome its ineffective appeal, was often frustrated. Many of these stage pieces rested quickly on the shelf in the closet.

The attitude toward the closet-drama was purely one of culture. A pseudo-interest in the grandiloquent style resulted in the separation of literature from the dramatic form. As soon as one realizes that literature is inherent in the substance and in the structure, so soon will ornamentation cease to be strung in useless festoons upon the necessary dialogue. For in all plays there is essential talk even as there are Sarcey's *scènes à faire*. It was a false idea of culture that created a false idea of closet-drama. For, though the theatre is based on imitation, it cannot abide a misuse of its essential structure in order to be called literature. More than any other critic, Professor Brander Matthews has persisted, in his writings, that the drama must comply with the practical demands of the playhouse in order to be drama. Pointing to the body of dramaturgy which has come down to us, he has been firm in his claim that "only literature is permanent." We will accept drama in any form, just so it be drama first of all. The managers, in accepting the French melodramas, were at least assured of certain identifying marks of the theatre which meant success. A part of their distrust of native material was merited.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Prolific Dion Boucicault[1]

I

"I generally have to start at the beginning of the alphabet," said Aubrey Boucicault, "when I attempt to recollect all the plays my father wrote." Yet, though his plays number over four hundred, only a few of them, of which "London Assurance", "The Colleen Bawn", and "The Shaughraun" represent the special types, are at all familiar to the theatregoer of the present. These are mentioned because they are indicative of the "genres" of the Boucicault drama: the Irish models destined to influence many future melodramas, and the comedy of manners, itself a brusque imitation of all that is sprightly and artificial in Goldsmith and Sheridan.

Because Boucicault was so intimately connected with theatrical life, he was narrowed by that very knowledge of stagecraft which made him strain character for situation. Edgar Allan Poe, in his estimate of Mrs. Mowatt, the actress, referred to "that despicable mass of inanity, 'London Assurance.'" However sweeping this opinion may be, it warns us at the outset to approach the Boucicault drama from across the footlights, and not at closer range.

The records of this dramatist's early life are contradictory. He was born in Dublin, on December 26, 1822, and was

[1] The fact that my "Famous Actor-Families in America" is now out of print has prompted me to make my chapter on Boucicault in that book the basis for the present interpretation. In condensed form, it has also been used to introduce "London Assurance", the text of which is in my "Representative British Plays: Victorian and Modern."

christened Dionysius Lardner Boucicault, after the great philologist and pamphleteer, Doctor Lardner, who was satirized by Thackeray in "The Yellowplush Papers."

Samuel S. Boucicault was the father of Dion, and there is some indication that, being a Frenchman, his name was spelled "Bosquet." This was further transformed into "Boursiquot", and once more changed to "Bourcicault", which was the spelling retained until *circa* 1856, when the "r" was dropped.

Some say that the father by profession was a banker and a brewer, while others would assert that he was a draper; not content, another source would claim that, when young Dion went to Paris, he adopted the title of "Viscount", and the report at the time was circulated that he was of noble extraction.

On the mother's side, Boucicault received his greatest heritage; she was a Miss Darley, an Irish lady, and sister of the essayist and dramatist, George Darley, as well as of the Rev. Charles Darley, who wrote "Plighted Troth", a play which failed so signally at Drury Lane. Boucicault appears to have shown some pleasure over this result, for his uncle had regarded his nephew's first efforts as works of a schoolboy.

Dion was the youngest of four, his three brothers being William (a banker), and George and Arthur, twins. Up to the age of nineteen, when his first play was written, contradictory statements are to be found regarding his education. One says that he was placed by Doctor Lardner with Stephenson, the famous engineer, where he studied for a while; and that he showed remarkable technical skill in his plans for the waterworks of London. The same writer adds that Boucicault "rode on the first engine of Stephenson's that ran between Liverpool and Manchester." There are various records of his having attended London University, where he counted among his friends Charles Lamb Kenney, a namesake of Elia. Pascoe gives Dublin as his school centre. Yet those who knew Boucicault, notably Stephen Fiske, wondered at his knowledge, and puzzled over how he secured his education.

In March, 1838, the first professional step was taken when

Dion joined a dramatic company at Cheltenham, England, and was billed as Mr. Lee Moreton. His maiden rôle was *Norfolk*, in "Richard III." Fourteen years after, he made his London début. But before this, in 1848, he was a widower, having been married since 1844 to a woman much his senior. The alliance was not a happy one, and when she died in Switzerland Boucicault returned to London, swathed in great mystery. He possessed a small fortune, to which was added the bounty of one of his relatives. Boucicault's silence about his foreign life created considerable suspicion. Certain it is that his wife's death did not deeply affect young Dion, who, when he reached England, proceeded to live in an extravagant manner.

The public eye was already upon him; at a surprisingly youthful age he had met success with the first of his dramas, "London Assurance", given its première at Covent Garden, on March 4, 1841. The name it bore proved to be a hasty substitution made just before the rise of the curtain, for originally it was called "Out of Town."

It will not bear analysis as a literary production [wrote the author in a preface to the second edition of the printed play]. In fact, my sole object is to throw together a few scenes of a dramatic nature, and therefore I studied the stage rather than the moral effect. I attempted to instil a pungency into the dialogue, and to procure vivid tones by a strong antithesis of character. The moral which I intended to convey is expressed in the last speech of the comedy, but as I wrote "currente calamo" I have doubtless through the play strayed far wide of my original intent.

"Barefaced assurance is the vulgar substitute for gentlemanly ease," says *Sir Harcourt Courtley*. ". . . The title of gentleman is the only one out of any monarch's gift, yet within the reach of every peasant." This is the substance of that last speech.

As Boucicault said, the "motive" was not sufficiently emphasized, but the stage pictures were effective and the characters afforded ample scope for good acting. Boucicault has written his own account of his début as a dramatist,

colored with a tinge of pleasant romance; he has told in a minute way his feelings, as he took the first play to Charles Mathews, who read it as a one-act piece. Surprised on seeing such a boy before him, Mathews encouraged him, though handing back the manuscript. Boucicault at the time thought that, had the drama been a five-act comedy, Mathews might have taken it, so in a few days he remodelled it and astonished Mathews by his quick reappearance. The play, now a larger roll of manuscript, was read and accepted. But when put in rehearsal:

Scene after scene [said Boucicault, in his pen-picture] was rewritten at the prompt-table and handed wet to the company. Thus the last speech of the play, which is technically termed "the tag", was composed and handed to *Max Harkaway*. The next day, or on some subsequent day, Vestris took the author aside and said: "Farren wants to speak the tag. I suppose you don't mind?" "Well," said the author, looking up with his Irish smile, "will it not sound rather strange in the mouth of *Sir Harcourt Courtley?*" [Originally called *Sir William Dazzle*, the surname afterward used for another character.] "Oh, never mind — I am sure the public will not. Bartley does not object; in fact, he approves." And so it stood.

The whole play was cut after a conventional model, of which "The School for Scandal" is the most poignant example. Boucicault was too young to do aught but reflect what he either had heard or had read. One may forestall his dialogue by the apparent directness with which the author works up to a point or situation.

"London Assurance" was made to order on the shortest possible notice [the dramatist continued]. I could have wished that my first appearance before the public had not been in this out-of-breath style; but I saw my opportunity at hand. I knew how important it was not to neglect the chance of production, the door was open, I had a run for it, and here I am!

For such a young man the play exhibited a remarkable proficiency and surety in dialogue, besides theatrical richness.

Once Boucicault spoke of wit as not possessing a soft and genial quality — of its being more admirable than endearing; and he condemned its excessive application as heartless. For this very reason he stigmatized "The School for Scandal" as the most cold-blooded drama on the stage.

But, in writing "London Assurance", it cannot be denied that Boucicault's eye was upon this more polished comedy of the eighteenth century. Nor, after all, was there much originality in "London Assurance", for, in other forms, its plot had been used before, and John Brougham himself came forward, claiming his share, not only in conceiving the character of *Dazzle*, but in supervising the construction of the whole piece. A long dispute followed, and Lester Wallack gave his opinion in favor of Brougham; but the latter was not overanxious to receive his just deserts, whatever they might be; his friends were the ones who persisted in pushing the case. Finally, it is believed, the two authors went to an attorney's office in London, and there Brougham prepared a statement as to his exact share in the work, and forthwith signed away all further claims on receipt of a substantial check from Boucicault. The dispute left no marked ill-feeling, since Brougham afterward appeared in many of the Boucicault dramas. Among them he played *O'Grady* in "Arrah-na-Pogue."

Such a misunderstanding at the outset of the dramatist's career is significant; it was to be repeated many times during the years to come. In fact, Charles Reade's remark should be borne in mind:

> Like Shakespeare and Molière [he said], the beggar [meaning Boucicault] steals everything he can lay his hands on; but he does it so deftly, so cleverly, that I can't help condoning the theft. He picks up a pebble by the shore and polishes it into a jewel. Occasionally, too, he writes divine lines, and knows more about the grammar of the stage than all the rest of them [the dramatists] put together.

Lester Wallack was at the theatre during the first production of "London Assurance." The managers of Covent Garden had done their utmost to mount the piece according to the

latest improvements in stage art. The audience saw before them rare examples of the boxed-in scene, where all the appointments were fitting and realistic. The stage manager was wellnigh stunned when the young dramatist asked him to use a real carpet in one of the settings. Herein may be noted another of Boucicault's claims to influence; more than any other playwright, he depended largely upon the accessory of scenes to reach certain effects. He used fire in "The Octoroon", and water in "The Colleen Bawn" — those external elements affording many outlets for thrilling situations. The Boucicault drama was essentially active. He studied his audiences carefully to note in what way they responded to a given climax — a surprise which he may have taken some time to prepare for them. And he reached the conclusion, after years of experience, that an actor's ability has its limited extent of power, of hold, of magnetism.

I have been able [he wrote] to compare results, and find that when an audience exceeds a certain size, it is very difficult to establish in it perfectly this fusion of minds. . . . Wherefore I am led to believe that a group of more than two thousand persons is not so susceptible to the psychic influences exerted by artists, as a group of less than that number. There is a limit to the genius of the actor as regards its reach over his audience; and no auditorium should exceed in size that limit.

II

Boucicault's first success was rapidly followed by other plays. "The Irish Heiress" was presented in 1842 and "Old Heads and Young Hearts" in 1844. Between these came "Alma Mater; or, A Cure for a Coquette" (1842), which he was accused of appropriating from an unacknowledged source; and his attempt to write a sentimental comedy at the age of twenty-one, bearing such a comprehensive title as "Woman", failed utterly. The newspaper comments were not overcordial. They did not ascribe to his second nor yet to his third piece the merit they assigned to his first. "And yet," Bouci-

cault added, in a naïvely impersonal manner, "the character of *Jesse Rural*, drawn from nature, seems to be a literary portrait of more merit than any of the heartless types of the older and more shallow composition." Thus, in 1889, Boucicault spoke with the confidence of a man who, having achieved, can afford to criticise and to estimate himself.

The remarkable fact throughout his career, however, was that no matter whether good or bad, original or otherwise, the Boucicault drama was eagerly sought by the theatre because it was made for the theatre. Laurence Hutton, in his "Plays and Players", writes of his most successful plays:

> The number of times each is said to have been played we noticed in a late newspaper paragraph, which seems to be given upon authority, and which as one of the curiosities of literature we transcribe here. "The Colleen Bawn" has been played 3,100 times; "Arrah-na-pogue", 2,400 times; "London Assurance", 2,900 times; "Rip Van Winkle", 1,400 times; "Old Heads and Young Hearts", 1,250 times; "The Octoroon", 1,800 times; "Formosa", 1,100 times; "Jessie Brown", 820 times; "The Corsican Brothers", 2,200 times; "Don Cæsar de Bazan", 1,700 times; "Used Up", 1,350 times; "The Willow Copse", 1,110 times; "The Streets of New York", 2,860 times; "Led Astray", 498 times. . . . The entire number of all these performances must have been almost 50,000. Estimating that the receipts of each performance averaged five hundred dollars, the public must have paid the enormous sum of twenty-five millions of dollars to witness the plays of this one man.

Hutton's book was issued in 1875, when the Boucicault taste had not subsided.

As fast as the dramatist wrote, just so fast were his manuscripts given to companies for rehearsal. Boucicault himself declared in the presence of Stephen Fiske that "he was a lucky bag out of which some managers drew fortunes and some drew blanks." Jefferson succeeded in putting his hand upon "Rip" — he did more than that, for it was he who put Boucicault's hand in the way of doing it; Frank Mayo secured "The Streets of New York"; Chanfrau reaped benefit from

THE PROLIFIC DION BOUCICAULT

DION BOUCICAULT AS *Con*, IN HIS PLAY, "THE SHAUGHRAUN."

"Writing, adapting, and translating four hundred plays in about forty-nine years."

Reproductions from photographs in the collection of Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

"The Octoroon"; and Robson and Crane were fortunate with "Forbidden Fruit."

At the London Princess Theatre, on the evening of June 14, 1852, Boucicault presented his own play, "The Vampire", it being his first appearance as an actor in that city. During this year he met Miss Agnes Robertson, who was supporting Mrs. Charles Kean.

Let us stop for a moment and gather a few characteristics around Dion Boucicault. One grows older with the years, but it is typical of Boucicault that he blossomed all of a sudden, that he slipped early into whatever intellectual maturity he was to possess; and thereafter he became surer in his powers, without greatly intensifying his insight into human nature. Stephen Fiske called him an enigma, "a gay, semi-fashionable, semi-Bohemian" fellow. He was impulsive, nervous, a quick worker, and as ready to flare into a rage as he was to exhibit his abundant Irish humor.

I knew [him] [writes Clement Scott] in the "Colleen Bawn" days at the Adelphi, when he had a magnificent mansion and grounds at Old Brompton. . . . I knew him in the days of "The Shaughraun", at the same theatre, and I met him constantly at the tables of Edmund Yates [*et als*], and I was also a frequent guest at his own table when he lived, as he ever did, money or no money, credit or no credit, "en prince" at his flat. . . . Dion was a born "viveur", a "gourmand" and "gourmet", and certainly one of the most brilliant conversationalists it has ever been my happy fortune to meet.

When John Coleman used to see Boucicault at Charles Reade's, in later years, the dramatist had become much older looking, but his nature was unchanged. Therefore, the picture given of him as one of the guests at Reade's table is not misplaced here, for he could sing his "The Wearing of the Green" with as much spirit at sixty as he could at any other time. Coleman wrote:

This distinguished actor and author had (so he himself told me) left England under a cloud, but had "cast his nighted colour off" in America, and returned to triumph. When we

first met he was living "en grand seigneur" in the famous mansion at Kensington Gore, which had formerly been the home of the Countess of Blessington. He was then making a fortune one moment and spending it the next. . . .

His accomplishments were many and varied. He knew something about everything, and what he didn't know about the popular drama (which to some extent he incarnated in himself) wasn't worth knowing. Although no longer young, his mind was alert as a boy's, and I can well believe what Charles Mathews, Walter Lacey, and John Brougham often told me — that in his juvenalia he was the most fascinating young scapegrace that ever baffled or bamboozled a bailiff.

He was still handsome. His head, though perfectly bald, was shaped like the dome of a temple, and was superbly, I may say, Shakespearianly beautiful. His face was a perfect oval, his eyes brilliant, his figure elegant. Old stagers were wont to say he was a mere replica of Tyrone Power — the famous comedian who perished in the wreck of the ill-fated *President*.

Such is a sketch of the man who married Miss Robertson and set sail with her for America in 1853. He was headstrong and reckless, as is shown by every vital circumstance connected with his life. He was gifted with a quick eye and a ready expression. So it was that "on the spur of the moment", as he says in that preface to "London Assurance", which he addressed to Charles Kemble, "I completed this work in thirty days. I had no time to revise or correct; the ink was scarcely dry before it was in the theatre and accepted." Such rapidity is an unwise and unsafe example to give any dramatist, but it would seem that all theatrically successful plays have been quickly constructed. This was the case with "The Lady of Lyons", penned by Bulwer to cover a former failure, as it was with "Camille", written because Dumas *fils*, as well as Dumas *père*, disapproved of a scenario made from the former's novel by some unknown and melodramatic playwright.

Boucicault combined, therefore, the rapid inventive gift with the aptness of the producer. He was strictly a writer for the stage, and he had the foresight to study his wife's capabilities as well as his own. He realized the limitations of each, and he wrote parts accordingly. Being Irish, he

possessed the moonlight sentiment which, in such plays, always shines upon a denied patrimony; because he was Irish, he had the right to be picturesque in a "mavourneen" way. His whole dramatic idea never went beyond the confines of the stage.

Even in acting — and he lectured many times upon the art — he averred that it "could be taught only on the stage, as swimming can only be taught in the water, and riding on horseback. All chamber tuition is worthless. Elocution and declamation are the last, not the first, lessons a young actress or actor should learn. . . . I deny that [the art] . . . can be taught and practised on a hearth-rug. I deny that *Antony* can address an imaginary populace, that *Romeo* can make love to an absent *Juliet*."

Wise at one moment and unwise at the next, Boucicault could have been a greater man had he not been so successful when he was successful. The very fact that he could defy failure with immediate success made him obstinately opinionated, and, though his advice was at most times practical and of the very best, what he told one day at rehearsal might the next day be reversed. There was a great instability in the character of Dion Boucicault.

His first act when he reached America was accomplished in the face of contrary advice from friends. He kept his marriage a secret, appearing in public with his wife, who was cast as Miss Agnes Robertson on the playbills. Soon he recognized the error of his ways; he found that his wife did not make any more popular impression than she would have done had she not used her maiden name. So, one evening in Boston, Mr. Boucicault came upon the stage and announced that he was the husband of Miss Robertson, and idle talk was set at rest.

III

Mrs. Dion Boucicault, of Scotch descent, was born in Edinburgh, December 25, 1833. She was only eleven years of age when she began to sing in public, and during 1851 she joined

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean's company, playing *Nerissa*, in their production of "The Merchant of Venice"; so, too, she filled many juvenile rôles. She was a ward of the Keans, and her marriage with Boucicault was not approved by them; indeed, so strenuously was it opposed, some think, that the young couple went off and settled the question for themselves. They came to New York, *via* Montreal, and, on October 22, 1853, Mrs. Boucicault appeared as *Maria*, in "The Young Actress." Mr. Boucicault's American début was made at the New York Broadway Theatre, on November 10, 1854, when he played *Sir Charles Coldstream* in "Used Up." The same year, Joseph Jefferson was managing John T. Ford's theatre in Richmond, Virginia, and he engaged Edwin Forrest and Mr. and Mrs. Boucicault to come to him.

Professionally, the success of these two was closely knitted. Despite the fact that she was constantly appearing in Philadelphia, and that she toured also throughout the United States, it was in New York that Agnes Robertson won her warmest favors. And if there had been any opposition on the part of the Keans to her husband, it had subsided sufficiently by 1855 for Boucicault to write a drama, "Louis XI", in which Charles Kean made a success. Previously a similar play had been conceived by W. R. Markwell, but the Boucicault drama was the one afterward used by Edwin Booth and Henry Irving; even the dramatist himself essayed to play the part of the French monarch.

Boucicault, referring to Irving in 1883, spoke truly: "He resembles absinthe. Some people make faces at his acting, at first, but the taste grows upon you and at last becomes an eager appetite." Irving had, when almost unknown, appeared in Boucicault's "Hunted Down."

Critics were warm in their praise of Mrs. Boucicault's *Jessie Brown*, when her husband's drama, "The Relief of Lucknow", was given at Wallack's Theatre, on February 22, 1858; they applauded her *Dot* in a version of "The Cricket on the Hearth", with Jefferson as *Caleb Plummer*. The performance occurred at the Winter Garden, on September 4, 1859. It is a curious instance of the indirect way in which

Boucicault reached out and took his material, that he based his play on a dramatization of the Dickens book, which had been done by two Frenchmen, and called by them "Le Marchand d'Enfants"; he was not aware of the story's existence until afterward.

There seems at a certain period of stage history to have been a perfect influx of Dickens dramatizations, even as Scott, during an earlier era, was tumbled promiscuously on the boards. The novelists were rich in their characterizations, which were all human, and at the same time placed in situations that appealed to the dramatic instinct of Boucicault. He soon had made a play from "Nicholas Nickleby", and, in November, 1859, when Jefferson created so successfully the rôle of *Newman Noggs*, Mrs. Boucicault's *Smike* was accounted "terribly tearful", the audience becoming enthusiastic over the pathos of the picture. With what the papers described as the prettiest of ballad voices, which gave forth a serene melody, unruffled by artificial trills, she again made an impression as *Jeanie Deans*, in a dramatization of "The Heart of Mid-Lothian", presented at Laura Keene's Theatre, on January 9, 1860. She was also the original *Zoë* in "The Octoroon" (December 5, 1859), and *Eily O'Connor* in "The Colleen Bawn" (March 29, 1860).

This latter piece is theatric and devoid of true psychology, yet it has the typical heart interest. The ideas of caste, the disappointed but faithful lover, the villainous solicitor, the suspicions and misrepresentations that are as a pebbly bed to the course of true love — these all lack intellectual consistency, but to the eye they lend color, and to the illusion they add excitement and stimulation. Though this play is regarded as a type of the famous Irish dramas written by Boucicault, it was not original in plot; it was founded upon a novel by Gerald Griffin, called "The Collegians." In *The Spirit of the Times*, for May 31, 1879, Boucicault was frank in his denial of that. "When I wrote 'The Colleen Bawn', I invented the Irish Drama. It was original in form, in material, in treatment, and in dialogue." In after years, Yeats and Lady Gregory were to endeavor, in the Irish plays of the Abbey

Theatre, to undo some of the harm done to Irish character by the Boucicault type.

"The Colleen Bawn" followed his "Vanity Fair", which, produced by Laura Keene, proved to be a failure; the actress had thereupon turned in distress to the dramatist. "What have you to put in its place?" she had queried. "Nothing", came the reply. But that night Boucicault stopped at a bookstore and purchased the above-mentioned volume, which he read from cover to cover through the early morning. Then he wrote in all haste to Miss Keene:

My dear Laura: I have it! I send you seven steel engravings of scenes around Killarney. Get your scene-painter to work on them at once. I also send a book of Irish melodies, with those marked I desire Baker to score for the orchestra. I shall read act one of my new Irish play on Friday; we rehearse that while I am writing the second, which will be ready on Monday; and we rehearse the second while I am doing the third. We can get the play out within a fortnight.

Yours, D. B.

Writing, adapting, and translating four hundred plays in about forty-nine years, Boucicault was of necessity a rapid worker, and, since a large number of these pieces found quick production, he and his wife did not have far to look in order to procure a wide range of rôles. But his characters made small demand upon subtlety. Active romance and feeling, cut after the same pattern, may, under all external conditions, be depicted by the same methods. Boucicault, despite his cosmopolitanism, was at the same time an Irishman, and his sentiment of locality was always his strong stand-by. There was a reminiscent touch to every phase of his work; — both his morality and his immorality were tinged with the sentiment and pathos of external influence. His characters had little internal communings.

IV

From 1860 to 1872, Mr. and Mrs. Boucicault remained in England, and on their return to America they repeated, at

Collection Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

THE BOUCICAULT POSTER

Very rare and much coveted by collectors. Green border. 24 × 17 inches.

Booth's Theatre (September, 1872), some of their former successes. In 1879, Mrs. Boucicault retired from the stage.

During this time the playwright was unceasing in his work, and plays rolled from his pen in rapid succession. This was not enough for an active temperament; Boucicault entered the field of theatrical management. As early as 1859 he had formed a partnership with William Stuart, and the two had presented Jefferson at the Winter Garden in repertoire; then, in 1862, Astley's Circus in London was renamed the Westminster, and here Boucicault produced under his own business direction "The Heart of Mid-Lothian" (January 26, 1863).

There is an interesting point connected with this experiment. The theatre was situated in a part of the town not frequented by the upper class; to reach the place, Westminster Bridge had to be crossed. It is always the case that when a house becomes associated in the public mind with a certain "genre" of drama, and when it has created its own class of audience, it is difficult to alter the impression by substituting another type of play and attracting a different class. But this is what the Boucicault campaign attempted, and by the time "Mazeppa" was announced on the bills, the fashionable world was crossing the bridge to see it.

Boucicault aimed to win the popular taste; he was often heard to say that he preferred fifty-cent audiences to any other, since they came for legitimate amusement, and did not look upon the theatre as a kind of interlude — an indispensable accessory to dinner parties. Nor did he hesitate to proclaim, whenever opportunity presented itself, that the drama was being kept decent only through the sincerity of this fifty-cent body.

Under his own direction, Boucicault presented "The Colleen Bawn" at Drury Lane (*circa* 1862), after he had severed his connection with Benjamin Webster, who owned the Adelphi. The misunderstanding which existed between these two very nearly prevented the first production of "Rip Van Winkle", which Jefferson was to give later. The version of the play had just been completed by Boucicault, and handed over to the actor, who was under the management of Webster.

Boucicault and he, on account of their differences, were not on speaking terms, and so, when Jefferson assembled his company to read them the manuscript of the play, neither the author nor the manager was present. However, the time arrived when the company was more than "letter perfect", and Jefferson finally prevailed upon Boucicault to attend a rehearsal. As soon as the playwright entered the theatre, however, his old grievances against Webster welled up, and he overflowed in abuse of the owner of the Adelphi. "Webster's management cannot compare with mine," cried Boucicault, tapping his cane on the floor. He was annoyed by some little discrepancies in stage detail. As was natural, the company became incensed at this breach of etiquette, and, from behind the curtain of one of the boxes, where Webster lay concealed, undefined sputterings of rage could be heard. The crusty old manager left the house, and wrote Jefferson post-haste that under no condition could he allow one of Boucicault's dramas to be acted at his theatre; that only if Jefferson saw fit to substitute one of the many other versions of the legend, could "Rip Van Winkle" be mounted on the boards of the Adelphi at the time stipulated. It is testimony to Jefferson's good will and diplomacy that the matter was sufficiently overlooked to allow the performance to proceed on the evening originally set.

Covent Garden Theatre was once the scene of Boucicault's extravagancies (1872). In partnership with Lord Londesborough, who rented the house, he prepared a spectacular, "Babil and Bijou", into which money was thoughtlessly poured. The production was not a great financial success, though some regarded it with favor artistically. Special musical features were prepared, and the choruses outrivalled anything of the kind ever heard before. Boucicault knew well how to spend other people's money — and he was equally as lavish with his own when he had it. In considering these many plays, it must not be forgotten that two dates of production should always be associated with each, since the dramatist was equally popular in America and Great Britain. For that reason, his views upon the interrelation of English

and American dramas were regarded significantly and were given close attention at the time they were uttered. He had cause to think conditions fair!

While in England, during that period between 1860 and 1872, Boucicault was intimately associated with Charles Reade, the novelist, who was as interested in the drama as was Charles Dickens, his popular contemporary. But Reade occupied a unique position in respect to his own books; he was dramatizer as well as writer.

In collaboration with Boucicault, he prepared a drama, in 1867, from "Foul Play"; it was not only a failure, but it resulted in another accusation of plagiarism which followed close upon its presentation. This attack Reade wholly denounced, and it is clearly seen that the public suspicion fell, not upon the novelist, but upon the playwright. The matter is fully considered in "Readiana", and excerpts produced from "Le Porte-Feuille Rouge", which was the bone of contention — the French model which was more than a "model." Afterward, Reade made another dramatic version under the title, "The Scuttled Ship."

When that novelist was dramatizing "It's Never Too Late to Mend", he let Boucicault have the manuscript; a short while passed, and a letter arrived from Dublin:

My dear Reade: I have read your drama, "N. T. L. T. M." There is in it a very effective piece, but, like the nut within both husk and shell, it wants freedom.

1st. It will act five hours as it stands.

2d. There are scenes which injure dramatically others which follow.

3d. There are two characters you are fond of (I suppose), but can never be played. I mean Jacky and the Jew.

4th. The dialogue wants weeding. It is more in weight than actors — as they breed them now — can carry.

Total. If you want to make a success with this drama, you must consent to a depleting process to which *Shylock's* single pound of flesh must be a mild transaction. Have you the courage to undergo the operation? I am afraid you have not.

Ever yours, Dion Boucicault.

Here was a man who reached his dramatic theories through practical experience. His character was such as to ignore advice unless it was the kind he himself most desired; his success inculcated within him an assurance which reacted upon him and made him conceited. His productions were hastily built, but they were examples of stage ingenuity, and out of them he hewed those principles which it profits every playwright to follow. Let us repeat: Boucicault grew in his mechanism, but the limits of his intellect kept him from becoming great. He wrote to please, he wrote for effect — two essential characteristics of the stagecraftsman. But he denied the accusation that he was ignorant of the history of the drama and its established rules of dramatic composition. He understood his craft and the craft of his predecessors, and his essay on "The Art of Dramatic Composition" is worthy of minute analysis. As a reader of plays he was quick to grasp the essential construction. He wrote:

The essence of a rule is its necessity: it must be reasonable and always in the right. The unities of time and place do not seem to be reasonable and have been violated with impunity, therefore are not always in the right. The liberty of imagination should not be sacrificed to arbitrary restrictions and traditions that lead to dulness and formality. Art is not a church; it is the philosophy of pleasure.

V

Once back in America, Boucicault dominated things theatrical; his name filled dramatic records; his opinions strongly influenced the theatregoing public. He lectured on the art of acting — a practical actor himself; he criticised managerial systems — himself a practical manager. He preached how plays should be written — a practical playwright; and when one of his own pieces was put on, he saw to it that each person in the cast was a part of the picture. He wrote, adapted, translated — whatever word you care to apply; up to the very day of his death he did not cease to contrive and to produce.

Blinded by an unaccountable tide of feeling, and regardless, as was his nature ever to be, of every one and everything, the impulsive Boucicault, in 1883, married Louise Thorndyke, a member of his company. His second wife was granted a separation in 1888. Thereafter, though he continued to compose persistently, the dramatist's powers waned. He became director of A. M. Palmer's School of Acting (Madison Square Theatre), and all the time he was made to feel that favor was slipping from him. Public opinion weighed him down more than he had anticipated, and in consequence his health rapidly failed. He died in New York, on September 18, 1890, with only a few friends to render service to the dead.

The summary of Dion Boucicault's life is a peculiar one; he was more impulsive than he was thoughtful, yet he was thoughtful; he was quicker to see effect in others and to assimilate it than he was original, yet no man could lay claim to more practical originality; he was extravagant and headstrong, yet he was kind of heart. He had a fund of knowledge and his dramatic instinct made use of it.

He was [said the loyal Agnes Robertson] excessively fond of reading, and he was one of the best-informed men of his time. He was very partial in his tastes to history. John Stuart Mill was his favorite philosopher; Goldsmith he preferred to all the poets, but he enjoyed Keats and Shelley also. He was well versed in the Bible, and I have often heard him in discussion with his brother William regarding the interpretation of texts which have been battled over by the theologians through the ages.

Boucicault was quick to lay hold of the events of the moment and to incorporate them in his dramas; instance "The Relief of Lucknow" and "The Octoroon." In its way the latter was quite as effective, controversially, as "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Yet Boucicault only made use of American topics as stage accessories. Even as a manager tries to find out what the public likes to see, as opposed to what the public likes to think, and then employs a dramatist to make him a play along the lines of least resistance, so Boucicault saw what was wanted, and fitted his idea to the picture.

Though closely identified with the history of American Drama, he was himself an Irishman, both in sentiment and in appearance. His sense of humor shone genial in his plays, and, as to the man personally, he was jovial in company and a moving spirit. His banter was pleasant and not in the least offensive, and he would say things with a broad brogue that came naturally. He knew well how to use the blarney stone, for he was ever ready to be agreeable.

As an Irishman, Boucicault was willing to stand by his remarks. A play of his was once staged, called "Suil-a-Mor", and it brought down upon him the wrath of the English because of certain direct utterances expressed against the home government. A hue and cry was quickly raised, and Boucicault was asked to eliminate the passages. "No," said the dramatist, "I mean just exactly what the lines convey. Rather than sacrifice my opinion, I'll withdraw the piece." This he did not have to do.

But, as an Irishman, Boucicault could not see his country in perspective with the student's eye. Though he wrote papers on the social conditions, on the class struggles that were existing there, his opinions were based upon a personal feeling rather than upon an actual realization of the social problem. His arguments were often sweeping for a man to make, especially one who in the public eye was to be subjected to close attention and close scrutiny by students. While his interest in the welfare of Ireland resulted in public utterances and in occasional pamphlets and references to be found in his plays, Boucicault was too much absorbed in his theatrical interests to devote any definite time to the subject. It was once suggested that he strongly desired a seat in Parliament; then rumor actually said that an Irish constituency had been offered him; but, if such was the case, the playwright was wise enough never to consider it. "By nature," he said, "I am intended for the drama, and for nothing else." At the time of his death Boucicault was at work upon a dramatization of Bret Harte's "The Luck of Roaring Camp."

His biographers will have a difficult task, tabulating his activity, yet no account would be considered complete that

did not enumerate some of the best known of his plays. "Arrah-na-Pogue", produced in London on March 22, 1865, belongs to the "Shaughraun" class; it was translated into French under the title of "Jean la Poste, ou Les Noces Irlandaises", and played in Paris (1866) for one hundred and forty nights.

In his own play, "Kerry" (1871), Boucicault acted "as if inspired by the genius of all that is great in Irish poetry, history, and romance." The following year he made a dramatization of Bulwer's "Night and Morning", and then came "Led Astray" (1873).

Belasco gives us a glimpse of Boucicault writing "Led Astray." The future playwright and manager was getting first-hand the tricks of the trade as practised by a seasoned writer. To the young secretary of Dion Boucicault — another "D. B.", by the way — the theatrical effectiveness of the scene was impressive.

It was at Virginia City, and the Irishman was ill; his hands were knotted with gout, and Belasco was to take down the dialogue and forget what he had heard. He recounts the experience in this manner:

So I sat at a table, took my coat off and began act one of "Led Astray." Boucicault lay propped up with pillows, before a blazing fire, a glass of hot whisky beside him. It was not long before I found out that he was the terror of the whole house. If there was the slightest noise below stairs, he would raise such a hubbub until it was stopped that I had never heard the like of before. Whenever he came to a part of the dialogue requiring Irish, I noticed how easily his dictation flowed. When he reached a dramatic situation, he acted it out as well as his crippled condition would allow. One thing I noticed particularly: he always held a newspaper in his hand, and gave furtive glances at something behind it I was not supposed to see. I was determined, however, to know just what he was concealing from me. The opportunity came one morning when he was called out of the room. Before he went I noted how careful he was to place a newspaper so that it completely hid the thing under it. I went quickly to the table and, turning over the pages, I found a French book,

"La Tentation" (by Feuillet), from which the entire plot of "Led Astray" was taken.[1]

"Robert Emmet" (1884) is still familiar. His plays all had their runs, some failures, others successes — every one theatrical. There are few of us to-day who will have an opportunity of seeing "Belle Lamar", "Faust and Marguerite", "Love in a Maze", "Hunted Down", or "Formosa"; occasion-

[1] One unsigned commentator of Boucicault went painstakingly to work to note the sources of the Boucicault dramas: "The Colleen Bawn" from Gerald Griffin's novel "The Collegians", which the dramatist vehemently denied; "Kerry" from Mme. de Girardin's play "La Joie fait Peur"; "Daddy O'Dowd" from Cormon's "Les Crochets de Père Martin"; "The Rapparee" borrowed from Brougham's "Emerald Ring", from Victor Léjour's "Madone des Roses" and from Watts Phillips' "Camilla's Husbands." From the French Boucicault took without stint: "Mimi" from Henry Mürger and Théodore Barrière's "Vie de Bohème"; "A Man of Honour" from "Fils Natural" of Dumas *fils*; "Seraphine" from Sardou's play of same name; "Pauvrette" from Dennery's "Bergère des Alpes"; part of "Forbidden Fruit" from Bourgeois and Brisetarre's "Un Coup de Canif"; "The Willow Copse" from Scribe's "La Closerie des Genets." Boucicault made a version of Dennery's "Prière des Naufragées", which he called "The Sea of Ice", and his "Louis XI" is Casimir Delavigne's play of the same name. "The Streets of New York" owes its existence to Brisebarre and Nus' "Les Pauvres de Paris"; and "Jezebel" to Michel Masson's "Le Pendu." "After Dark" received incentive from Dennery's "Bohemiens de Paris." "Don Cæsar de Bazan", "The Corsican Brothers" and "Faust and Marguerite" are strictly French adaptations. For "Janet Pride" he looked to Dennery's "Marie Jeanne"; for "Foul Play" to Fournier and Mercier's "Porte-feuille Rouge." Had it not been for Bayard's "Gamin de Paris" there might not have been an "Andy Blake"; and were it not for Duvert's "Homme Blasé", there might have been no "Used Up." "Belphegor" suggests Dennery's "Paillasse"; "Genevieve" the "Chevalier de Maison Rouge" by the elder Dumas and Maquette. "Pauline", renamed "Spell-bound", came from a dramatization of the elder Dumas' novel, "Nuit de Terreur", dramatized as "Château de Beauval." "The Queen of Spades" was lifted from Scribe's opera book of the same name.

In the realm of the English novel, Boucicault was equally as alert. He took from Richardson in his "Clarissa Harlowe"; he turned to Dickens' "The Cricket on the Hearth" and "Nicholas Nickleby." "The Trial of Effie Deans" was drawn from Scott's "The Heart of Midlothian", and "The Long Strike" from Mrs. Gaskell's "Mary Barton." "The Octoroon" owes much to Captain Mayne Reid's "Quadroon." And just as easily as he accepted plots, so did Boucicault use other authors' titles.

The Boucicault drama was brought to France through the adaptation of Eugène Nus, who turned "Arrah-na-Pogue" into "Jean-la-Poste", where it had a long run at the Gaieté Theatre, Paris. He also made a version of "The Long Strike", called "La Depêche." "Hunted Down" was turned into "Aux Abois" by de Majac.

The above is only an indication, not a complete record, of how Boucicault worked in the interests of the theatre of the seventies. He was ungenerous in giving credit where credit was due.

ally there are revivals of "London Assurance" and "The Corsican Brothers." But when you have seen one, you have found the key to them all. Boucicault never liked the criticism of sameness which was so often applied to his work.

Still, the relationships are very close, for organically these pieces move with the same rhythm, they flourish upon the same humor and pathos, they commit the same ravishing absurdities; one feels like exclaiming with George William Curtis, "Ah, had the painter only taken more pains!" The same writer said: "The charm and the defence of the 'Shaughraun' are those of 'Rip Van Winkle' — they are its humanizing character and influence. . . . What is the 'Shaughraun' but a jocund Irish 'Rip', or 'Rip' but a 'Shaughraun' of the Catskills?"

We are often able to judge of a man by the estimate he makes of himself. Boucicault was not one to hide his talents beneath a bushel; he knew when to proclaim them from the housetops. Perhaps he was thrust into his rapid gait of work by the existing conditions of the dramatic copyright law which, in America up to 1856, did nothing to protect the author. It was in 1856 that Congress decided the author did have the rights to his own brain efforts, the right of production and the right to grant permission, without which it would be a legal offence to produce his plays. In France, Boucicault had seen the dramatists prospering with a royalty system; for years he too fought for the same opportunity, and only succeeded finally by openly defying the Dramatic Authors' Society in England, and the managers in the United States.

This he proceeded to do (*circa* 1860) by sending forth more than one company in his own plays, and taking a proper commission for himself from the proceeds of each performance. Boucicault, indeed, by these travelling companies of his, was instrumental in hastening the decline of the old stock system. In 1866, he preached his ideas to the French, who greeted them favorably, and by 1872 the United States had accepted them.

The royalty system was insisted upon by Boucicault after dire experience. Writing in 1879 he said:

To the commercial manager we owe the introduction of the burlesque, opera-bouffe, and the reign of buffoonery. We owe to him also the deluge of French plays that set in with 1842, and swamped the English drama of that period. For example: the usual price received by Sheridan Knowles, Bulwer, and Talfourd at the time for their plays was £500. I was a beginner in 1841, and received for my comedy, "London Assurance", £300. For that amount the manager bought the privilege of playing the work for his season. Three years later I offered a new play to a principal London theatre. The manager offered me £100 for it. In reply to my objection to the smallness of the sum, he remarked: "I can go to Paris and select a first-class comedy; having seen it performed, I feel certain of its effect. To get this comedy translated will cost me £25. Why should I give you £300 or £500 for your comedy, the success of which I cannot feel so assured?" The argument was unanswerable, and the result inevitable. I sold a work for £100 that took me six months' hard work to compose, and accepted a commission to translate three French plays at £50 apiece. This work afforded me child's play for a fortnight. Thus the English dramatist was obliged either to relinquish the stage altogether or to become a French copyist.

"The Shaughraun" was played in London, on November 6, 1875, having been first produced at Wallack's Theatre, on November 14, 1874. The ease with which Boucicault could shift his point of view is here exhibited. Lester Wallack had commissioned him to write a play, but before it was completed another drama, more suited to his talents, had been purchased. So he went to Boucicault, who had advanced some way in the mapping out of "Boyne Water", and laid the case before him. "I'll tell you what I'll do," suggested the ever-ingenious playwright, "I'll change the period of the piece, and, taking certain scenes from the manuscript, I'll build up a wholly different drama." The evolution resulted in the character of *Con*, lovable, poetic, and picturesque.

Boucicault was never to be outdone, whatever the circumstances. So intent was he during the rehearsals of "The Shaughraun" regarding the other characters in the cast that,

on the opening night, when he reached the theatre, he suddenly realized that he had wholly forgotton to pick himself out a costume for *Con*. So he rushed to the property room, and on with an old coat that had done service for *Tony Lumpkin*, and on with an old cap belonging to that same individual! Grabbing an odd pair of boots from a discarded chest — and he was ready! But disasters came thick and fast on this occasion. The second act called for a moon; just as the scene was about to begin, the stage orb exploded, and when the curtain rose the audience was amazed to find a black hole where the moon should have been. A burst of laughter showed their further appreciation of a slip in stage management, for silver ripples quivered on the water! In retrospect Boucicault once said:

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1874.

WALLACK'S.

Proprietor and Manager.....Mr. Lester Wallack

DOORS OPEN AT 7.30. PERFORMANCE COMMENCES AT EIGHT.

TO-NIGHT AND EVERY NIGHT,

Appearance of the Irish Dramatist and Comedian.

Mr. DION BOUCICAULT,

The Author of "The Colleen Bawn," "Arrah-na-Pogue," "Kerry," "Daddy O'Dowd," "Irish Heiress," "London Assurance," "Love in a Maze," "Rip Van Winkle," "Mimi," "Old Heads and Young Hearts," "Woman," "Octoroon," "Jessie Brown," "Love and Money," "Formosa." "Jezebel," "Lost at Sea," "Jeanie Deans," "The Corsican Brothers," "Hunted Down," "After Dark," "Belphegor," "Janet Pride," "Don Cæsar de Bazan," "Napoleon's Old Guard," "Sixtus the Fifth," "Dot," "The Life of an Actress," "Used Up," "Vanity Fair," "Smike," "Flying Scud," "Babil and Bijou," "Elfie," "Belle Lamar," "Foul Play," "Mora," "The Knight of Arva," "The Long Strike," "The Willow Copse," "Andy Blake," "Genevieve," "How She Loves Him," "Louis XI.," "Pauvrette," "Streets of New York," "Man of Honor," "The Phantom," "Faust and Marguerite," "Led Astray."

In an entirely New and Original Play, in 3 Acts, illustrative of Irish Life and Character, entitled

THE SHAUGHRAUN.

The action of the play takes place in the County Sligo.
Time—The Present.

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY.

CAPTAIN MOLINEUX, a young English Officer, commanding a detachment at Ballyragget.....MR. H. J. MONTAGUE
ROBERT FFOLLIOTT, a young Irish Gentleman, under sentence as a Fenian, in love with Arte O'Neale.MR. J. B. POLK
FATHER DOLAN, the Parish Priest of Shinbeg, his tutor and guardian.....MR. JOHN GILBERT
CORRY KINCHELA, a Squireen.....MR. EDWARD ARNOTT
HARVEY DUFF, a Police Agent, in disguise of a peasant under the name of Keogh.....MR. HARRY BECKETT
CONN, THE SHAUGHRAUN, the soul of every fair, the life of every funeral, the first fiddle at all weddings and patterns.....MR. BOUCICAULT
SERGEANT JONES of the 41st.....MR. LEONARD
MANGAN, } Peasants { .....MR. JOSEPHS
REILLY, } Peasants { ....MR. E. M. HOLLAND
SULLIVAN, } Peasants { .....MR. C. E. EDWIN
DOYLE, } Peasants { .....MR. PECK
DONOVAN, } Peasants { .....MR. ATKIN
ARTE O'NEALE, in love with Robert.....MISS JEFFREYS LEWIS
CLAIRE FFOLLIOTT, a Sligo Lady.....MISS ADA DYAS
MRS O'KELLY, Conn's Mother.....MADAME PONISI
MOYA, Father Dolan's Niece, in love with Conn.MISS IONE BURKE
BRIDGET MAHLIGAN, a Keener.....MRS SEFTON
NANCY MALONE, a Keener.....MISS BLAISDELL
Peasants, Soldiers, Constabulary.

THE ACTION OF THE PLAY.

ACT I.—SCENE 1—SHILABEG. (Isherwood.) The home of two Irish girls—the visit. Molineux seeks a day's sport, and finds game he did not expect. The two guardians. Father Dolan gives Kinchela a piece of his mind. The Police Agent. The unexpected visitor.

SCENE 2—THE BLASKETS. (Morris.)—Conn's Cupboard. The Fugitive. Two lovers. A fling at the bell.

SCENE 3—THE EXTERIOR OF FATHER DOLAN'S. (Clare.) The Shaughraun. Conn goes hunting. Moya and her Sweetheart.

SCENE 4—THE HOME OF THE PARISH PRIEST. (Clare.) Conn makes a clean breast of it. The Fugitive's Return. The Priest's Fireside. Home again. The knock at the door. The arrest.

ACT II.—SCENE 1—A ROOM IN BALLYRAGGETT HOUSE. The counter plot. The murder planned.

SCENE 2—FATHER DOLAN'S. (Clare.) Claire and Molineux find each other out. SCENE 3—THE RACE-ROOM. (Morris.) How Robert Ffolliott fell into the trap and swayed into the hands of his foes.

SCENE 4—MRS O'KELLY'S CABIN. (Isherwood.) Conn gets a letter and is borrowed, he breaks away from his mother's apron strings.

SCENE 5—THE GATE TOWER. (Matt. Morgan.) The ambush and the escape.

SCENE 6—THE BLASKETS. Conn and Robert hunted. How Conn played the fox.

SCENE 7—RATHGARRON ROAD. How Claire Ffolliott played decoy-duck and snared the Captain.

SCENE 8—THE RUINS OF ST. BRIDGET'S ABBEY. (Matt. Morgan.) The lovers meet. Arte and Moya at the appointed spot. The bait and the trap. Harvey Duff makes a mistake and gives a signal. The Shaughraun takes a rise out of him and gets a fall.

ACT III. SCENE 1—MRS O'KELLY'S CABIN. The amnesty. A light breaks in upon Molineux. An unexpected interview.

SCENE 2—THE WAKE OF CONN THE SHAUGHRAUN. Great news. Conn hears a good deal of news about himself. A surprise. Two unwilling guides.

SCENE 3—THE SHANTY. Arte and Moya.—Finale.

SCENE 4—THE COUNTRY SIDE. Harvey Duff gets into a warm corner. Kinchela comes to a bad end. Father Dolan gives a testimonial.

During the evening, the Band, under the direction of Mr. THOS. BAKER, will perform the following selections:

OVERTURE, "Shaughraun,".....BAKER
Introducing Old and New Irish Airs: "Irish Wail," "Cuish la mo Chroe," "You remember Ellen," "Willie Reilly," "The Jolly Ploughboy," "Arran More," Solo Cornet, "The March," "Green Gallo," "The Jog of Touch," "The Coulin," "Sell Cockles and Cullo," "The Red Fox," Jig "St. Patrick was a Gentleman," &c.
FANTASIE (new), "Romanina Kaja,"...(on Kopack Melodies).....GUENEA
WALTZ (new), "Do Do,".....STRAUSS

When "The O'Dowd" was written ten years ago [1872], I perceived that the character belonged rather to high comedy-drama than to melodrama. It occurred to me also that the Irish character had been associated with plays of a low sensational class, and that an effort to raise the whole edifice of our national drama might be made. In this spirit, "Suil-a-Mor" was written as a pure sentimental comedy, with a strong emotion for a spinal column. As a literary work, it therefore may rank more highly than the "Shaughraun" or the "Colleen Bawn", because it does not depend on scenery or on sensational, or we may say, physical effects, but rather invites the attention and engages the emotion of the audience by its human sufferings, and its development of character and passion. I think so far as dialogue goes, the best writing to be found in these plays is in "Arrah-na-Pogue."

Dion Boucicault presents a diversified picture — one to be condemned and to be admired. He was too successful to be professionally jealous, and we find him befriending Henry Irving, Robertson, Byron, and Taylor. As a friend, he became an ardent supporter of Oscar Wilde, when that poet made his visit to America in 1882, and he was also foremost in his encouragement of Sadie Martinot, bringing her over to appear in his plays. So active was Boucicault in every line connected with the stage that his activity became a joke among his associates. He was the wonder of the hour, and he posed as such.

Boucicault has left his impress upon the development of drama, and his name is an important one in its history. But few of his plays bear the permanent elements that will preserve them for the next century. He was original, if by that word we mean that he was entertaining; otherwise he was clever — a cleverness based upon his gift of dialogue, however imitative, and his knowledge of stagecraft. Vance Thompson's estimate is fair:

"He gave his age what it wanted. . . . He was a dramaturgical matador. . . . The Boucicault drama is dead; any discussion of it is in the nature of an autopsy. Its most notable quality was its gayety — its fine animal spirits. It was merry and clean."

CHAPTER NINE

Wanted — Some Native Dramatists in the Seventies: An Unaccented Phase of Augustin Daly

· I

What was the exact status of the American Theatre in the eighteen-seventies? It was dominated largely by the managerial personalities of Augustin Daly (1838–1899), Albert M. Palmer, and Lester Wallack (1820–1888). Its most spectacular playwright was Dion Boucicault, who was turning out plays with surprising ease, and introducing to the stage scenic efforts that appealed to theatregoers. The stock company was in its last phases of development, and the peculiar fitness of Agnes Ethel, Fanny Davenport, Clara Morris, and Kate Claxton for certain rôles prompted the managers in their search for material. At Wallack's, Lester and H. J. Montague were the reigning male stars and Rose Coghlan the reigning queen. Their efforts were along the line of the rising tide of Robertsonian drama; "Diplomacy" and "A Scrap of Paper" were among their crowning successes. "The Shaughraun" was among their sensations. At the Union Square Theatre, Sardou, Octave Feuillet, and the French melodramatists reigned supreme, and "The Two Orphans" was the high mark of public interest. Their production of "Camille" linked history with the version first presented by Matilda Heron under the managerial *régime* of Laura Keene (1856). At Daly's first Fifth Avenue Theatre, the initial policy was similar to that at Wallack's, the Robertson drama holding sway, with revivals of the classics and of old English comedy.

Such adaptations as "Frou-Frou" and "Fernande"; coöperation with Wilkie Collins; successes like "Article 47" would indicate that his vision was not so very different from that of Palmer.

Yet, in the midst of all this foreign policy, the eighteen-seventies called into play the ingenuity of the American playwright, as well as some of his originality. Palmer kept A. R. Cazauran busy with adaptations, and full credit has never yet been given him for the deftness with which he filled requirements. An editorial in one of the theatrical journals of 1879 or 1880 commented on him thus: "For a moderate salary and an occasional royalty, he has literally saved many a plan from failure. In 'The Danicheffs', 'Miss Multon', 'Man of Success', 'Mother's Secret', 'Celebrated Case', etc., his work has been most important." He not only turned foreign plays into their English dress, but also lent aid to Bronson Howard in the final working out of "The Young Mrs. Winthrop", — all the changes suggested by Palmer, to which the dramatist acceded when he came to revising what was first called "Lilian's Last Love." Mr. Howard's problems of revision are set forth in his "Autobiography of a Play", which at the same time suggests the working of the conventional mind of audiences in the "seventies." "In England and America," wrote Howard, "the death of a pure woman on the stage is not 'satisfactory', except when the play rises to the dignity of tragedy. The death, in an ordinary play, of a woman who is not pure, as in the case of 'Frou-Frou', is perfectly satisfactory, for the reason that it is inevitable." Such conventional "rules of the game" Cazauran taught him, and he soon learned that a play on the stage is, in its finished state, far other than the one the author had in his mind, or wished to write. Bartley Campbell did for Palmer "Peril" and "My Partner." After Daly had exploited the American scene, in Olive Logan's "Surf" (January 12, 1870), he turned to Bronson Howard, and, on December 21, 1870, presented "Saratoga", to be followed, in 1872, by "Diamonds" and, in 1874, by "Moorcroft." It was in 1878 that the dramatist went over to Palmer with "The

Banker's Daughter." The manner in which Howard fluctuated between Daly's and the Union Square and the Madison Square measures somewhat the intensity with which these houses competed against each other. I do not suppose they differed much in the demands they made upon the playwright.

Very significant were the conditions under which Belasco was employed to write his "Valerie" for Lester Wallack, even in 1882. In Winter's "Belasco", the actor is reported as having said: "I think I have one more study in me [this to Belasco], and I should like you to try to make for me a play with good parts for Mr. Bellew and Miss Robe, and with a character for me similar to *Henry Beauclerc*, in 'Diplomacy.'" With no original play in mind, it was decided between manager and playwright that Sardou's "Fernande", which Daly had once produced, should be the venture. It was a play of one strong scene, of a woman's scorn. It was the old model. It was the pattern used by Steele MacKaye, however much he might try to breathe into "Paul Kauvar" sentiments of republican interest, just as Judge Conrad infused into "Jack Cade" a supposed American spirit.

The outward pictures of the drama of the day were melodramatic, overemotional, sensational, sickeningly sentimental, and written in a dialogue that is now hard to reconcile with one's taste for consistency or truth. Such stage carpentry was done with earnestness by the worker in the theatre; and so much energy was expended in such second-hand writing that it was hailed as original, however much its source might stare one in the face. This source was generally common property: the adaptation was fought for in the courts as inviolate. Maintaining her rights to "Camille", in the face of competition, Miss Heron issued a "Card", mentioned by Laurence Hutton, wherein she hurled anathema against a competitor. Says Hutton: "Miss Heron . . . states . . . that in her own case she had at that time given over seven hundred representations of the part during the five years she had been playing it; she had 'out of pure devotion to her art, given to every detail of it the utmost of her power of body, heart, and mind, to perfect each element of it, to prune its blemishes,

erase its defects, harmonize its beauties, elevate its tone' (elevate its tone!) — 'sublimate its passion, to celebrate its love; in a word, to bring it to that state of powerful fascination, poetic interest, and immortal life which, on its first representation, the warm hearts and best pens of the country predicted it was capable of, and which to-day the entire press of New York pronounces accomplished.'"

A strange study is that of the theatre-going taste of the eighteen-seventies. It fed itself on romantic dreams, on love of class distinction in a country where no class was supposed to exist. It cared nothing for the craft of the theatre. The playhouse was a stunt, not an organism; the emotional quality of the actor was what counted. The relish was for just the kind of melodrama the French dramatists were turning out. The heightened emotion of Dumas *fils*, the sentimentality of Robertson, the scenic efforts of Daly's "The Streets of New York" or of "The Two Orphans" — lords and ladies, bandits, wronged innocence — this was the food of fifty years ago. To it was brought the most superlative acting of a certain type; the acting that threw emotion in the face to blind one to the crudities of expression, of motive, of story. Yet it is the expression, the motive, the story, the structure we are asked to judge in print. It is hardly fair to estimate the drama of this period outside the theatre which gave it birth.

Among some old papers handed me by Professor Brander Matthews, I find an uncorrected proof which I infer is part of an article by him. I venture to quote one paragraph which seems to be significant to our present purpose. It says "that our comedy has been remiss in noting the fine coynesses of human nature, resting content to note merely certain floating characteristics, mechanically caught, and with no free exercise of art. We have had hitherto in comedy outline types, as it were, the equivalent of the conventional characters of the Italian *commedie dell' arte*. *Mose* is from New York and *Asa Trenchard* is from Vermont, and *Judge Bardwell Slote* is from the Cohosh district, just as *Pantaloon* was from Venice and *Punchinello* from Naples."

Why is that, this writer questions? He wisely quotes from a contemporary issue of the New York *Nation:*

One great difficulty with the drama in the last hundred years is, we believe, more the result of the great social changes which have been introduced into life by the democratic movement than anything else. Everybody knows that the first requisite for the stage is the strongly marked types, which can be easily recognized. The soldier, the judge, the gentleman, the nobleman, the courtier, and the king and queen must all have well-defined characteristics which enable the spectator (not the reader) to recognize them at once. Any influence which tends to wipe out the visible distinctions between such classes, and make one man like another, is bad for the stage, just as distinctly as all progress toward uniformity in costume is bad for painting. The democratic movement during the last hundred years in England and in this country has been constantly tending to produce this result and to make all classes and conditions of men more and more alike in manner, in dress, in intelligence, and in their code of morality. All this may be very good for the people, but it is very bad for the stage; and in this country it has reached such a point that outside of low comedy and burlesque . . . it is not easy to say where to look for types at all.

The dramatic time stands self-confessed. Eccentricity was to take the place of human nature. What did Palmer say on this score?

The prominent evil tendency of the American writer has been to look for his types among his countrymen of the baser sort, who never by any possibility pronounce English words properly and who seem to take the greatest pains to speak slang and utter vulgarisms, and to act as if good manners were a reproach instead of an accomplishment.

The fact of the matter is that the manager of the eighteen-seventies tried to stretch the term "American" to mean everything but the native scene. He was not pleading the cause of the national drama, but justifying his own managerial policy. He wanted no striking out along roads that had not been tried before. He said: "Boker might have idealized the Kentucky tragedy instead of the Rimini drama, and Bird

might have made his Spartacus an Indian Chief — but our national theatre has lost nothing by their omission. The present masterpieces of the stage, in every tongue, are pictures of the passions of mankind in general."

Yet the times were turning. Soon Ibsen was to be heard from, and Zola with his violent reaction against sentimentality; and Dion Boucicault feared, in the cry of naturalism and realism, the knell of his own popularity. He deprecated the pessimistic shifting of the tide, but he saw it was inevitable.

Tragedy and high comedy will always be held in respect on the future American stage [he wrote], but it seems probable that the drama of modern life, the reflex of the period, will prevail over every other kind of entertainment. This drama will present a character, or a group of characters, not a complicated or sensational action, affording a physiological study by way of illustration, not by way of description.

They begged the question, those men who dominated the American Theatre in the eighteen-seventies. They sneeringly referred to the sensational dramas of the Western frontier, yet warmly exploited the lurid melodrama of any other country; they could not see that their foreign policy was circumscribing the native playwright and making him merely a tool. Daly declared that there could be no better American play than his "Leah, the Forsaken", and that this could easily be seen by comparison with the original German, "Deborah", of Mosenthal. The infusion of the American serum was all that these managers thought necessary. To a reporter, Daly once said:

I have been constantly confronted with the necessity of finding American characters in nearly all the pieces I have adapted from the German. This was the case in nearly every instance in "The Big Bonanza", "Lemons", "Needles and Pins", "7–20–8" and "Red Letter Nights." In the original form of each of these plays, no matter how clever the characterization or how effective the contrasts might be, it was indispensable, in preparing them for the stage, with any hope of pleasing my patrons, to do away entirely with one or more German characters and fill the place with an American type which my audience would all know and would applaud.

AUGUSTIN DALY

ALBERT M. PALMER

CHARLES FROHMAN

AMERICAN MANAGERS WHO DICTATED TO THE AMERICAN DRAMATIST FOR OVER A HALF-CENTURY.

The reproductions of Daly and Frohman are from photographs in the collection of Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

This shows clearly that the drama of the period was handled as a commodity, the standard parts coming from abroad and fitted for home consumption. It was a method that lasted well on into the nineties. To catch the spirit of the stage and make the pieces actable was the ultimate ambition of the dramatists of the day. Perhaps this was not a bad object in view, considering the amateurishness of so much of the workmanship. Daly's continual advice was: collaborate with some one who knows the mechanics of the stage. Many papers emphasized that this was the matter with Bret Harte's "Two Men of Sandy Bar": it was choked with material which fiction could handle but which cluttered the stage. Daly also preached the avoidance of the American theme. "As a matter of fact," he declared, "the dramatists of this country seldom do choose American subjects, but nearly all greatly prefer foreign material. They are entirely right in this." But Daly's fear that "nationalism" was a restrictive term was not the true issue. The American spirit to him was the motive which took out of certain foreign pieces elements accounted "not moral" by the theatregoers of the time.

Palmer's belief was that the American mind, as determined by the manuscripts which were submitted to him, was lacking in "the faculty of inventing dramatic situation and plot." "One reason for it, I suppose," he declared on one occasion, "is to be found in the fact that our American life is so fresh and new that it does not afford good material for the subject-matter of plays, except, perhaps, in one or two phases. These phases are those seized upon and exhausted by Mr. Boucicault in 'The Octoroon', and by Mr. Daly in his play 'Horizon.'" What Mr. Palmer really had in the back of his mind, but dared not say, was that the flat and the insipid — in the American society play of the time — were due to the unwillingness of the manager and the public to let the dramatist speak in frank terms, unless he used a French model. So the American Theatre fell into the habit of "making plays" rather than of writing them — John Brougham had a formula, a pattern for his dramatizations of novels; Boucicault was,

par excellence, the most adept cutter of French cloth. The entirely original play was almost an unknown quantity.

In his moments of quick temper, Boucicault realized all this. He looked upon Planché and Dance as a menace. He regarded Negro minstrelsy with suspicion. "Buffoonery," he wailed, "has displaced comedy, and sensational drama has replaced tragedy. . . . *Lord Dundreary*," he declared, "is only a Negro minstrel with a white face." He wanted, as he asserted, to write dramas like "London Assurance", with the flavor of old comedy, but managers were after him for melodrama with a sensation scene in it.

All of these men had an idea that there had been in the past some sort of American drama. They had learned as much through the pioneer history of American dramatists by Rees; and they proudly hailed the number of titles given in a check bibliography by Dunlap. They sneered at the attempts at historical drama for practical reasons. Such plays as "Putnam; or The Iron Son of '76" and "Marion; or, The Swamp Angel" were favorites once. Writes Daly: "A pecularity of this kind of national drama was that it necessitated the keeping in stock, at all regular theatres, of an actor who could make up as the 'Father of his Country'. . . . But that sort of American Drama went out with the pit boys and the volunteer fire department." What Daly found to deplore, in the situation he faced in the years starting in 1870, was the unwillingness of the American author of note to enter the field, to subject himself to the demands of the theatre. Collaboration would bring many a valuable man into the fold. Both he and Palmer were insistent that by this method an author would soon learn the limitations of the stage, which call for a different handling of material from that he had been accustomed to in the short story and the novel.

II

It has been the generally accepted notion that Daly's interest in German adaptations (aided in later years by the insistence of Heinrich Conried, who ran an author's agency

before he began his distinctive work as manager of the German Theatre in New York), particularly his gravitation toward Mosenthal; and in his French melodramas, in the main Sardou, precluded much interest in native dramatists. But, reading carefully the valuable "Life of Daly", by his brother, Judge Joseph F. Daly, one is justified in holding the impression that hardly a season passed that he did not reach out for material from the pens of Mark Twain, Bret Harte, W. D. Howells, and Henry James. He was closely in touch with these authors, and, if they failed to come up to his expectations, the reason for such failure is clearly evident in their letters. Bret Harte was continually in correspondence with Daly, and always with a play up his sleeve. He writes:

> Look for me then on Sunday at 10 A.M., at wh. hour the curtain will rise promptly upon the performances of two young men from whom posterity expects everything.
>
> Confidentially yours,
> BRET HARTE.

In 1874, Harte and Boucicault were contemplating a Western drama together; it was to be called "Kentuck" — a title which Boucicault termed "Brethartish", and in the working out of which the author of "The Colleen Bawn" declared: "I must do the society dialogue and scenes . . . as I think B. H.'s best work is *rough character* and *male*." The collaboration did not progress easily, however, and there were moments when Boucicault would have sidestepped. For Harte, showing the defects of the purely literary man as soon as he enters the theatre, was difficult to manage. In a letter to Daly, marked *private*, Boucicault tells tales out of school. "Harte is dilatory and erratic," he writes. "He is very anxious to get the work done — but thinks we can scurry over the ground more rapidly than is consistent with safety." That is all we hear of "Kentuck", but not all from Harte. In 1876, he is writing to the manager for seats, in fact for a box.

> Then we can sit in the back of the box, between the acts, and discuss the *other play* — wh. Shakespeare ought to have written but wh. as he did not, I may possibly undertake . . . .

Harte's success with Daly was accomplished in conjunction with Mark Twain, the two of them writing "Ah Sin", given at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, July 31, 1877. His attempt with Boucicault was finished alone, and produced under the name of "Two Men of Sandy Bar." It would seem that the Chinese drama came very nearly obliterating Harte from consideration. Only Mark Twain was at the theatre on the opening night, his collaborator being in Washington. Harte was forgotten altogether in the excitement, until he wrote Daly a wail to know whether or not the piece had been well received. In later years, while Harte was Consul at Glasgow, he wrote to Daly regarding his dramatization of "The Luck of Roaring Camp", but nothing resulted.

Daly dramatized Mark Twain's "Roughing It." In 1873, the manager approached the author for an original play, and received the following reticent acknowledgment:

Hartford, May 4.

My Dear Daly:

One of these days, somewhere in the future, I may surprise and grieve you by reminding you of that invitation, & proposing to revive it; but I mean to have the modesty to serve a decent apprenticeship before I make a lofty venture.

I never tried the stage before; but by re-writing Peter Spyk, I managed to change the language & the character to a degree that enabled me to talk the one & represent the other after a fashion — but I am not equal to the Metropolitan boards yet. . . .

Immediately on top of this, he is writing to Daly, suggesting that he stir up Howells, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, who, he hears, is at work on a play. "I know Howells well," he remarks, "but he has not confided anything of the kind to me." The secrecy which usually attended the ceremony of "writing a play" was broken when Howells acknowledged Daly's invitation.

I have long had the notion of a play, which I have now briefly exposed to Mr. Clemens, and which he thinks will do. It's against it, I suppose, that it's rather tragical, but perhaps

— certainly if you've ever troubled yourself with my undramatic writings — you know that I can't deal exclusively in tragedy, and I think I could make my play in some parts such a light affair that many people would never know how deeply they ought to have been moved by it.

I have also the idea of a farce or vaudeville of strictly American circumstances.

Of course I'm a very busy man, and I must do these plays in moments of leisure from my editorial work. I'm well aware that I can't write a good play by inspiration, and when I've sketched my plots and done some scenes I shall, with your leave, send them for your criticism.

The next correspondence between Howells and Daly was in reference to the former's comedietta, "The Parlor Car." The author of it wrote:

It was meant to be printed in *The Atlantic*, and so the stage direction, for the reader's intelligence, was made very full [this was long before the time of Shaw!]; but I read it to an actor the other day, and he said it would *play*. I myself had fancied that a drawing-room car on the stage would be a pretty novelty, and that some amusing effects could be produced by an imitation of the motion of a train, and the collision.

Howells's "A Counterfeit Presentment" was tried in Boston by Barrett, and at this time Daly attempted to interest him in the adaptation of a German comedy, but Howells was much more intent on the Spanish drama and on Björnson's "Bankruptcy." In an intellectual way he was trying, and failing in his approach of the stage. During the year 1893, when Daly was looking to Marion Crawford and Henry James for manuscripts, he heard again from Howells — a confession and a plea:

I have written a great many of them [comedies] since you underlined the first so long ago, and they have had great acceptance all over the country among amateurs, without ever getting upon the stage. I do not say that it is not their fault, but "The Mousetrap" seems like something that might please the larger and severer public that pays for its pleasure.

Judge Daly asserts that "Ah Sin" required more altering than Bronson Howard's "Saratoga." Certainly these literary men could not distinguish between dialogue and narrative. But Mark Twain never gave up trying. He offered Daly his dramatization, "Bob Sawyer's Adventures", but it was turned down. Another dramatic attempt with another manager was called "Colonel Sellers as a Materialist", but, as that failed, Twain changed it into a novel, "The American Claimant" — a story which Daly immediately thought would make a play! Twain, at Bad Nauheim, was not to be caught again. He wrote to Daly:

You bang away and dramatize the book *your* way & that will be *my* way. . . . These are mighty good baths, & if you want to try them come here & I will treat to bath tickets.

They were closely associated — Daly and Clemens; they were together at the founding of The Players, and on the occasions of many banquets. As manager and playwright, they did not make a fortune together. Not despairing of the Great American Drama, Daly next turned to Henry James for a play suited to his company. But the manuscript from the novelist was declined, and Daly received this letter, quoted in part as illustrative of how strangely the story-writer goes wrong in the theatre in the fundamental technique of a play:

I am far from satisfied myself [with it], but as the thing cost me, originally, a good deal of labor & ingenuity, I was unable to resist the desire to subject it to some sort of supreme probation. If it had a fault of which I was very conscious, I thought it perhaps had other qualities which would make it a pity that I shouldn't give it a chance — since a chance so happily presented itself. To tell the truth, now that I have given it this chance my conscience is more at rest, & I feel that my responsibility to it were over. Its fault is probably fundamental & consists in the slenderness of the main motive — which I have tried to prop up with details that don't really support it; so that — as I freely recognize — there is a lack of action vainly dissimulated by a superabundance (especially in the last act) of movement. The movement cost me such pains — and I may add such pleasure! — to elaborate that I

have probably exaggerated its dramatic effect — exaggerated it to myself, I mean. The thing has been my first attempt at *comedy*, pure & simple, & as 1st attempts are, in general, mainly useful as lessons, I am willing to let it go for that.

His analytical mind was much exercised over "Mrs. Jasper", which Daly, in 1892, was holding for his new theatre in London. The manager was not satisfied with the piece, and evidently suggested more revision and cutting. But James's style was not of the kind to submit to external operation. He wrote to Daly:

I have given very earnest consideration to the text of my play, but with an utter failure to discover anything that can come out without injury. It was in the extremity of my effort at concision and rapidity during my writing of it as it now stands that I took out & kept out everything that was *not* intensely brief — & this effort seems . . . to have left nothing behind to sacrifice — nothing that can be sacrificed without detriment to elementary clearness — to the rigid logic of the action & the successive definite steps of the story.

Daly soon after lost faith in "Mrs. Jasper."

Of the authors mentioned, Bret Harte was probably the greater lover of the theatre. He did not hold it in contempt, he labored hard and was not disheartened by the defeat of "Two Men of Sandy Bar", which Boucicault declared contained sufficient matter for six plays. It was produced at the Union Square Theatre, September 1, 1876, and William Winter's contemporary impression was that the author had moved his puppets recklessly. "Mr. Harte's greatest mistake," so this ever punctilious critic claimed, "supposing that he desired his drama to be popular on the stage, is in rewarding vice. . . . Even the Chatham Street Theatre in the old days would never have tolerated it." Harte had a hasty temper: he had started collaboration with Boucicault and had withdrawn. His work with Mark Twain on "Ah Sin" resulted in coolness between the two. And unfortunate for them that they were brought together, for Brander Matthews asserts that it was the halt leading the blind, since neither had served real ap-

prenticeship in the theatre. That was the fault with "The Danites", which Joaquin Miller seems to have hastened after Harte's "Two Men of Sandy Bar." And another play which, in its Western flavor, seemed to have been called forth by Harte was Bartley Campbell's "My Partner" — a play "of mad passion and horrible suffering", to use the words of the critic in 1879.

T. Edgar Pemberton has written entertainingly of his collaboration with Harte in London, of the latter's fascination for the stage. The literary man was always held in thrall before the curtain; he always preached the lure of the form. But somehow he always proved unwilling to allow his individual creativeness to be curbed, governed, directed by the demands of the stage, the requisites of the actor. The unfortunate thing was that Harte's material attracted theatre folk. Much to his indignation, both "M'liss" and "Gabriel Conroy" were used without his consent in America, and he smarted beneath the indignity of inadequate treatment. Most of his theatrical associations were in London.

A pulling about of "Ah Sin" would have made it a great success, claims the biographer of Mark Twain, and in the confession lies the weakness of the literary man's attitude toward the theatre. Playwriting is something more than a mere manipulation. Twain saw the acting possibility of another Chinaman rôle for the actor who had played a Chinaman in "Two Men of Sandy Bar", and this seems to have been the prompting desire of the two collaborators — to frame a vehicle for the player. Twain had some sympathy with this point of view, for he was no mean amateur player himself, and often appeared in family theatricals to much effect. His name will always be associated with the theatre because of the fact that he was among the charter members of The Players Club. He realized the fascination of the stage, even though with "The Gilded Age" and "Ah Sin" he had had no agreeable experiences as a dramatist; but he thought the formula was a hit-and-miss affair, a following up of some model tried and found successful. The chief thing, he believed, was novelty,

Collection Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

JOHN T. RAYMOND AS *Colonel Mulberry Sellers* IN MARK TWAIN'S "THE GILDED AGE"

"There's millions in it."

Collection Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

COLONEL SELLERS MEETS MARK TWAIN

and because *Col. Mulberry Sellers* had proven a novelty, he set to work, with W. D. Howells, to write a sequel. The enjoyment of these two in their work, the amusement they themselves found in the scenes of their invention, blinded them to its defects. Twain had had a misunderstanding with the actor, John T. Raymond, about "The Gilded Age", but he knew that Raymond, in the public eye, was *Mulberry Sellers*, and so to Raymond the new piece went. But it was soon returned with suggestions which the authors refused to heed. And at last, when the play was produced by an elocutionist, they began to realize the wisdom of withdrawing it. The faith of the unsuccessful dramatist dies hard, Howells wrote. So the contents of the play went into the story of "The American Claiment", and then, irony of the theatre, Daly wrote for the dramatic rights of the story!

As spectators, Howells and James had a keen sense of the theatre. Their various essays on acting, actors, and plays are enlightening and suggestive. They brought to the stage a strictly literary analysis of what they saw. This is never a guarantee that one understands fully the elements that make a play in the theatre sense. James was very exacting; he could not see the theatre in the making, the actor through his faults. For that reason it was impossible for him to detect any note of greatness either in Henry Irving or in Ellen Terry. Howells wrote regularly on dramatic topics for the Harper publications, and gave the American Drama its rightful claim to serious consideration. It was he who recognized in Herne the pioneer realist of the American stage; it was he who lauded Harrigan for his vaudevilles of low life; it was he who gave courage to Clyde Fitch when the theatre critics were hitting him hard.

But clearly it is to Henry James we must turn for an insight into the attitude of the literary man toward the theatre. He learned much from his play writing, even though he did not earn much; and it was the money incentive which impelled him toward the theatre. He felt that he was destined not to be an appreciated man of letters; therefore, he must feather his nest for the coming years. What more

easy than to turn toward the theatre! James, however, soon became deeply engrossed in the intricacies of the technique of the drama. His mind was completely enthralled by the form. He wrote to his brother, in 1891: "Now that I have tasted blood, *c'est un rage* (of determination to *do*, and triumph on my part) for I feel at last as if I had found my *real* form, which I am capable of carrying far, and for which the pale little art of fiction, as I have practised it, has been, for me, but a limited and restricted substitute." He hailed drama for its difficulties; to him its damnable difficulties "guarantee one's *intellectual* self-respect." But soon he turned against what became a trade; he shuddered over the odiousness of a production. He smarted beneath the Philistine mob in London that constituted the theatregoing public.

I have worked like a horse [he writes to his brother, in 1895], far harder than anyone will ever know — over the whole stiff mystery of "technique" — I have run it to earth, and I don't in the least hesitate to say that, for the comparatively poor and meagre, the piteously simplified, purposes of the English stage, I have made it absolutely my own, put it into my pocket. The question of realizing how different is the attitude of the theatregoer toward the quality of thing which might be a story in a book from his attitude toward the quality of thing that is given to him as a story in a play is another matter altogether. *That* difficulty is portentous, for any writer who doesn't approach it naïvely, as only a very limited and simple-minded writer can. One has to make oneself so limited and simple to conceive a subject, simply enough, and that, in a nutshell, is where I have stumbled.

Indeed, that is where most literary folk stumble who have a contempt for the smell of the theatre, for its painted scene and its personality. The simplicity of which James speaks is not a limitation but an asset — a dealing with motive in its essential threads, an expression direct and quick to heed by the ear, that cannot "listen" back in the theatre but must forever go on toward the final speech and the final curtain. James's dialogue was literary, it was full of fine shading such as fiction courts but the stage abhors. Lines that describe but do

not act, details that enlighten the reader but confuse the spectator, side motives that explain character but fail to move forward the main lines of the story — it does not require simple-mindedness so much as clear-mindedness to satisfy the demands of the theatre. One of James's London friends declared the novelist echoed George Moore's opinion that "acting is the lowest of the arts, if it is an art at all." He witnessed everything eliminated from a play that means most to a novelist; it angered him. He is reported to have spoken of "the hard meagreness inherent in the theatrical form, committed to think after all so much more of the clock than of the subject — the subject which runs so breathless, so fearlessly flogged a race with the galloping dial-hands."

IV

The two pictures of the manager of Daly's era and the playwright of Mark Twain's era will emphasize the wide gap which existed between the theatre and the literature of that time in America. There is some little excuse for the literary man taking the attitude he did toward the playhouse, for the theatre was not regulated by the highest rules of the technical game; it was dominated by set conventions, workable rules that governed both actor and producer. Daly could hardly expect the writer to throw away an art and become a stage carpenter, piecing together for public consumption certain shreds of emotion, certain well-worn situations, to be tricked into life by clever acting. If Howells turned with enthusiasm to Herne, and was one of the coterie that helped produce "Margaret Fleming", he did so because he realized that Herne was pointing a way for reconciliation between literature and drama in America. The necessity for the bridging of the chasm was recognized long before the renaissance of the English drama and the arrival of the Continental drama made us see the true value of the "new" theatre ahead of us.

Belasco claims that when he went to the Madison Square Theatre, the safe was piled with manuscripts submitted by most of the noted authors of the day. These scripts are in

dark oblivion; they may be so deservedly. For the theatre of that period was not prompted by any literary fervor. But, on the other hand, the scripts thus lost to posterity might not have been prompted by any conception of real dramatic technique. Daly wanted the literary worker in the theatre on the terms the theatre then demanded. The literary man wanted to use the theatre without any willingness to acknowledge the necessity for training in workmanship. The theatre terms at that time were not worth the sacrifices demanded, except in hard dollars and cents. Aiming for the latter, James lost both, the usual fate of any one who fails to love the theatre with a passionate resolve to accept its limitations and discover its latent possibilities.

CHAPTER TEN

Bronson Howard: Dean of the American Drama

I

As Dean of the American Drama, Bronson Howard occupies a most significant position. The theatre is a very sensitive barometer, registering current ideas and local manners, and if one should range Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion" (1847), Mrs. Bateman's "Self" (1856), and Mr. Howard's "Saratoga" (1870) side by side, the timely differences would be very strikingly felt. The point of view held by Mr. Howard at the close of his life had a broad sweep toward the future and a very vital sweep along the past. For, in respect to the latter position, he was able to estimate the value of that dramatic soil and of those dramatic traditions from which he sprang; he was so situated that he could step aside from the main current, and note wherein the later drama had profited by its inheritance.

It is unfortunate that in the years to come, the estimate of Mr. Howard, based upon his numerous popular successes, will not be a very high one, even though "The Banker's Daughter" and "Aristocracy" are marked with a certain valuable social quality. This stricture is partly due to the fact that he wrote at a time when our American stage was flooded with French imitations and importations; when, as Mr. Howard himself declared, adaptations for the English speaking stage not only meant a change to English life and English characters, but meant also that, in the transference, these characters continued "to express foreign ideas and to act like foreigners."

But Mr. Howard's right to the title of Dean of the American Drama can never be disputed, for, whatever is done in the future to enrich our native dramaturgic literature, it will have been through the efforts of Mr. Howard that the first impetus toward that efflorescence was given. In the early seventies he stood single-handed, with the Anglicism and classicism of Daly, Palmer, and Wallack as his chiefest opposition, and he forced the public gaze upon current thought and manners. So as to accomplish this object, he was obliged to have recourse to conventions more French than they were American. What is of most importance is that Mr. Howard by his plays established the *fact* of the American Drama's existence — plays in a way far more native than the romantic pieces by George Boker and the Philadelphia group. It is an unfortunate possibility, however, that unless our dramatic literature emphasizes the essential elements from which our national drama has come, Mr. Howard in the future will be little more than a name to theatregoers, outside of the profession. For his plays are hardly literary in the sense that they possess reading style or grace. That is to be deplored, inasmuch as Mr. Howard, intellectually, was of a high type of mind, while as Dean he always supported that which aimed to be the best.

It were futile indeed to regard Mr. Howard as a producing playwright from any other angle of vision than that of his day. His technique, his observation, his *locale*, are of a generation that is gone; and, though the humanity of his characters still retains acting possibilities, the American Drama of 1910 was subject to far different influences. We then began passing through the fires of scientific query and realistic handling of the sex question. Dion Boucicault, as late as 1890, only vaguely felt that there was something in Ibsen which demanded what he called serious regard.

Yet he could not but see the far-reaching effect of Ibsen's viewpoint and technique. He wrote:

The drama of the future will be prosaic and positive. Its grandeur will be in its truth. Pathos will assume the place of passion. The plot, a subject simple and perspicuous, will be

designed with one object, not to surprise the spectator with startling incident. The incidents will be merely contrivances to exhibit the characters.

Long before this storm and stress period in stage history, Mr. Howard's method was so far crystallized as to remain unaffected by later technique. And, toward the latter part of his life, it was curious to behold in him a man intellectually so far in advance of his method of writing. For, despite Ibsen and Zola and Tolstoi; despite Howells and James and Meredith; despite Pinero and Jones and Shaw, Mr. Howard's last comedy, "Kate", was untouched by current influences, however much it strove to be modern. In this play his ideas of life deepened, his technical grasp became firmer, his insight keener, but his discussions were all clad in form typical of "The Banker's Daughter", "One of Our Girls", and "The Henrietta."

When Mr. Howard began to write for the theatre, the influence of Scribe, and his manner of unfolding plot and counterplot, had not yet been succeeded by a more natural method of development. Even Ibsen was under Scribe's influence. Dumas *fils*, with "Camille", had injected into the romantic play of intrigue and infidelity a species of emotional analysis which was somehow mistaken for an ethical purpose. Furthermore, Robertson and Taylor, borrowing freely from the elder Dumas and Hugo on one hand, and from the comedy of incident and manner on the other, simply Anglicized the French form of drama for the English stage. Mr. Howard found such to be the conditions when he began his struggles.

He found that English managers realized it was less expensive, and involved less risk, to employ Boucicault, for example, to translate French plays, — to *adapt* them, as they phrased it, — than to experiment with a new play that had never been tried upon the public. He found that in America the situation was very much the same. Popular opinion was led to value an importation, and to discount any serious treatment of American character or of American life. He found, finally,

that there was only half-hearted interest in the American Drama on the part of two of the leading managers of that era, however much they might write optimistically on the subject in current reviews or in their reminiscences. Lester Wallack in no way encouraged native talent, even though his excellence as a stage manager helped to give the theatre an abundant amount of English comedy and tragedy; even though he was author of a local play called "Central Park." The same may be claimed of Augustin Daly, who nevertheless aimed to be American in "Under the Gaslight." But his was likewise a foreign ambition, for he mounted adaptations of French and German farces whenever he wished to depart from the Shakespearean or classical comedy repertoire of his New York theatres; he catered distinctively to culture, and how well he succeeded is measured by the atmosphere which for so long a while after his death clung to his Broadway playhouse at Thirtieth Street.

II

Such is the setting to aid us in claiming for Bronson Howard the full appropriateness of the title: Dean of the American Drama. Mr. Howard was born in Detroit, October 7, 1842, during a time when that city was considered the extreme West. To undertake a journey there from the East was a notable accomplishment, and, in one of James Fenimore Cooper's numerous autobiographical references, we find him boasting of the feat. In the "Leatherstocking" tales, moreover, one of the characters was based on Mr. Howard's father — a man of adventurous nature, of firm disposition and determination — a man, in fine, of the pioneer type. The intense American strain in this family reached back as far as 1759, when one of the Howards came over from England with Wolfe's army, and, strange to say, almost immediately began to realize that the colonies were right in their attitude toward the mother country. This sympathy increased to such an extent that Howard enlisted with the "rebel" forces during the Revolution — an act that resulted in his death on the field at Monmouth, New Jersey.

Mr. Howard's grandfather was quick to catch the westward spirit, though loath to break from the East. He was a roving farmer, who moved from Howard's Settlement, on Lake Ontario, thence to a point in New York State, near the St. Lawrence River, and he instilled into his own son that same instinct to migrate which had prompted the Revolutionary sire to roam from place to place.

Mr. Howard's father was a commission merchant in Detroit, at the time of his son's birth. He had been a captain of a schooner in the days when sea-faring encouraged mutinous crews — composed mostly of a cursing, grog-beset, brutal type of sailor. But Howard, Sr., was of a different calibre from most sea commanders. He banished the freedom of oaths from the deck; he cleared the lockers and holds of all grog; he insisted upon discipline, which his friends told him could never be maintained where grog was denied. His actions as commander hastened the establishment of liquor regulations in the maritime service, and abolished from its prominent position on deck the water-cooler which had up to this time been filled with grog for any one who cared to turn the spigot. His immediate reward was that he obtained differential rates of insurance which other seamen coveted, but were denied. Bronson Howard was proud of this bit of family history.

Without giving up entire interest in the ship business, Howard, Sr., joined the firm of Alvin Bronson and Company, Bronson, after whom the young man was named, being at one time State Senator at Albany, from Oswego County. In some of the early playbills we find the full name of the dramatist recorded as Bronson Crocker Howard, Mr. Crocker being another partner of the firm. Many of his journalistic friends used to address him as B. C. Howard, though he preferred the shorter form as more distinctive and individualistic.

From 1842 to 1858, therefore, young Howard remained in Detroit, long enough to secure the rudiments of an education, to see his father mayor of the city (1849), and to develop what his father bequeathed him, — an inventive taste which ex-

panded later and aided him, when ingenuity was required of him behind the scenes at the theatre.

Howard, Sr., was accustomed to whittle rough vessels from blocks of wood; this we may consider as symbol of the mechanical side of dramatic construction. In fact, before the Prismatic Club, of Detroit, Mr. Howard once claimed that the mechanical engineer and the dramatist required essentially the same technical training. He afterwards, before the students of Harvard University, reasserted this, in connection with his play, "The Banker's Daughter."

Young Howard was now sent East to prepare for Yale, — the class of 1865; but, though General Russell's preparatory school did its work successfully, nature went against the scheme, and Howard's eyes failed him in 1860. Later, he was granted the privilege of attending a few lectures with his class, but he was never able to matriculate.

During this time, the written drama as a profession was farthest from his thoughts. He had manufactured a few skits for his school, and had become unswerving in his determination not to enter a trade. In fact, stimulated by the books and by the lecturing of Bayard Taylor, Howard was bent on becoming a writer. With this phase we must now deal, for it will indicate how subtly and how surely natural inclination asserts itself. Unknowingly, we are led whither our tastes prompt us, and Howard's first literary effort, based upon a purely literary enthusiasm for the then recently published American translation of "Les Misérables", proved to be a play.

With all the confidence of youth, he persuaded a manager to let him attempt a drama called "Fantine", based on some of the Hugo incidents. It was played by a local stock company, managed according to the custom of the day. The "star" was the only one to travel, going from one city to another, in each of which a stock company was ready to support him. When written, this crude first attempt was found to be unfit for the practical side of the theatre; with all the inexperience of the inexperienced amateur, Howard had expanded the first act until it was sufficiently long to be a play in itself.

But, undaunted, he set about pruning and cutting. What man can ever expect to become a playwright without that energetic willingness to slave, labor, and hope? Mr. Howard always possessed to a large degree the unfailing optimism of the true craftsman, and he once said, after he had gone through thirty-eight years of theatre service: "I never can understand the doubts as to whether one can do a play, if he really has it in him; he just goes and does it without questioning." This determination which Mr. Howard always preached was an inspiration to his younger associates, and to many of them he used to say, "When you find yourself standing in the way of dramatic truth, clear the track!"

An interesting state of affairs existed in those days, excellently illustrated by the fate of "Fantine." This play was never published; in fact, for a long while Mr. Howard considered the manuscript as lost. The only trace of it to be had was a "skeleton" copy which it was customary to give to the prompter: that is, the play with all the leading parts omitted, and only the cues as a guide. This "skeleton" precaution was necessary because of the copyright weakness which allowed all kinds of piracy to be committed in the profession. There were slight means of protecting the author's property in those days, a fact which added to Mr. Howard's interest in the dramatic copyright debates. Under such conditions, it would never do to allow the prompter to have in his possession the entire manuscript. The "skeleton" was of small value to Mr. Howard; but, fortunately, the "leads" being extant, they turned up unexpectedly some years after, and were dropped into the setting like missing stones in a mosaic.

The eventful year of 1864, therefore, found Bronson Howard making a start as playwright. Another interest was drawing him to the stage, for he was serving a Detroit paper as dramatic critic and, besides, was reading plays for his own amusement, familiarizing himself with the historical development of play writing, which is a necessary acquisition for dignified theatre work.

These were war times, but young Howard does not seem to have been drawn into the vortex, until it was rumored that an

invasion of the Union was to be attempted by the English from Canada. For several nights, in consequence, Howard tramped the shores of the Lake, waiting in the darkness for momentary attack, and experiencing all the excitement that comes before a battle. There was no invasion, so he left Detroit, in 1865, and landed in the *Tribune* office, New York, where he was detailed as reporter to write up the novel opening of the season at Coney Island. From 1867, intermittently until 1872, Howard attended isolated lectures, but most of his energies were expended on journalism, in a day when newspapers were being quickly founded, and were as rapidly changing hands.

In the usual journalistic career, which, as we have said, is so characteristic of many of our native playwrights, Mr. Howard's history is exceptional. For he was trained in a newspaper school that produced Whitelaw Reid, and, from 1868 to 1872, he was filling varied positions on many editorial staffs. He received his first honorarium, as dramatic critic, under Charles H. Sweetzer, who founded the *Round Table*, a precursor of the *Nation*, and was next sent to report the Yale commencement and the Yale-Harvard boat race, for the *Evening Gazette*. It was while on the latter paper that one of his associate reporters was assigned a notable task — to follow up and describe how the first bag of mail was brought to New York from Philadelphia, an incident which was the beginning of the post-office system on its present gigantic scale.

Howard then followed Sweetzer to his new paper, the *Mail*, assuming the nominal office of first president of the Mail Association. But the paper was sold in 1870, and John Russell Young then employed Howard on the *Tribune*, making him exchange editor. Toward the latter part of 1871, he went over to the *Post*, continuing his journalistic career, despite his intervening dramatic ventures, through 1876, during which year he wrote Centennial articles for the London *Pall Mall Magazine*, and for the Detroit *Free Press*. Before this, however, his determination had been firmly settled to devote all of his energies to the drama. It was probably about this

time that his intimacy with Mr. (afterward Sir) Charles Wyndham began. The latter's first managerial venture occurred in "Hurricanes", which, written by Mr. Howard, was renamed "Truth" in James Albery's adaptation for England. In 1880, Miss Wyndham became Mrs. Bronson Howard.

III

Despite the lethargic state in which Mr. Howard found the American dramatist, and despite the absolute inertia of the American Drama itself, he entered the contest with great energy. So thoroughly were foreign models dominant on the boards that he later confessed how one of his earliest manuscripts contained speeches in which Newport people went about exclaiming "Egad!" in real eighteenth-century style. Mr. Howard was always fully aware of the historical changes in drama, the shifting of social attitudes, of moral conventions. Every dramatist, unless he be distinctly a reformer, is loath to overstep such conventions. Mrs. Inchbald, in one of her dramatic prefaces, refers to playwrights of her day as being far behind the period in method and in subject matter; yet at the same time she was astounded to find Mrs. Centlivre utilizing the *clergy* in one of her plays! It took years for the stage minister to make his appearance in society drama.

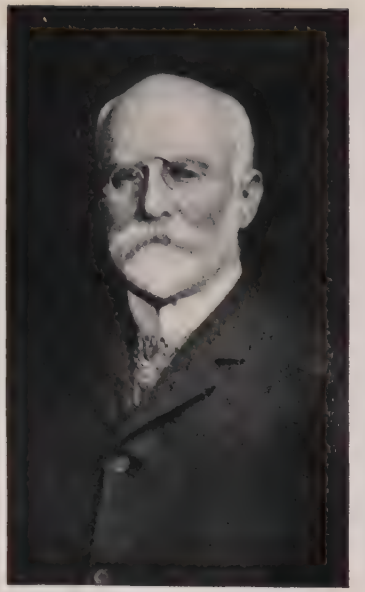
Mr. Howard once said that in Rachel Crothers' "The Three of Us", such a heroine as is there portrayed — one who enters a man's room at midnight, to outface his threats and to outwit his claim that he will compromise her — was thirty or forty years in coming. Augustus Thomas has written that he held "The Witching Hour" in his desk for several seasons, waiting the psychological moment when public sentiment would be alive to the truth of hypnotism. Ibsen trained us all to an acceptance of heredity as a stage subject, and he confessed in his correspondence that he was willing and anxious to shock average conservatism, without waiting for the opportune time to do things. He was always in advance of his public; hence his isolation and loneliness; hence the

storms of protest raised against him. This only indicates the public's sensitiveness to dramatic change.

Mr. Howard accepted theatrical convention as it existed in 1870; his one and only fight was for the recognition of the American dramatist. Just before Robertson held sway in the early sixties on the English stage, the old-style drama was in the ascendancy; nineteenth-century people were viewing and were accepting manners of another era. But Robertson gave a twist to such a state of affairs; the theatre pendulum swung back to its normal balance, and, though he did not entirely free himself of the foreign yoke and of the earlier romantic influence, Robertson at least focussed the glass upon contemporary condition. This accounts for such a play as "Caste"; it explains many touches in the dramas by Bronson Howard.

From "Saratoga" (1870) to "Kate" (1906), Mr. Howard dealt with American character, largely in the midst of foreign atmosphere. The advance from the same "Saratoga" to his "Aristocracy" (1892) was only an advance in neatness and closeness of dialogue. That feminine brightness which drew down upon him the wrath of contemporary critics was admirably adapted, as it was in the case of Clyde Fitch, to the French treatment. But the Anglo-French background detracts from the sincerity of American Drama. Yet, should one look closer, and not judge by externals entirely, it will be seen, in the case of Mr. Howard, that, in spite of the prejudice against American dramatists and American themes, in spite of the exotic character of his technique, of his construction, he anticipated many of our present-day dramatic workers in the selection of his themes.

"The Young Mrs. Winthrop" (1882), however stereotyped in its adherence to the "aside", is a domestic play of strong import, by the side of which Alfred Sutro's "The Walls of Jericho" is no more powerful arraignment of society forces drawing husband and wife apart. "Moorcroft", though it failed, exhibited Mr. Howard as aware of the value of timeliness in theatre work. He had witnessed the instantaneous effect of "Uncle Tom's Cabin", and had noticed the melodra-



Bronson Howard

Steele MacKaye

Collection Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

William Gillette

matic success of Boucicault's "The Octoroon." It is natural, therefore, that this "Moorcroft", based on a story by John Hay, should have dealt with the slave trade in similar melodramatic manner.

"Baron Rudolph" (1881) foreshadowed by many years the stage treatment of the struggle between capital and labor, so crudely handled by Charles Klein in "The Daughters of Men." Then there was "The Henrietta" (1887), to my mind one of Mr. Howard's most characteristically American plays — barring a few out-of-date touches — which might very well be classed with "The Lion and the Mouse", Frank Norris's "The Pit" (dramatized by Channing Pollock), and "Business is Business" ("Les Affaires sont les Affaires"), in which Crane acted. In claiming this distinction of *previousness* for Mr. Howard, it must always be borne in mind that his was pioneer treatment, which won its way in the face of managerial prejudice and productive barrenness. "Shenandoah" later became the forerunner of such a superior drama as William Gillette's "Secret Service."

Mr. Howard's progress toward the recognized position of *dean* of his profession was by no means a rapid or an easy one. I have before me accusations of diverse kinds registered against the dramatist, for there were many critics who could not see originality in any of his work. In 1874, when "Saratoga" (Anglicized "Brighton" by Frank Marshall) was presented in London, the *Times* loudly proclaimed that the play was simply a recast of Scribe's "Les Eaux." Mr. Howard protested vigorously in the newspaper columns, yet he was dignifiedly silent when critics pointed to his "Diamonds" (1872), and discovered in it distinct reflections of "Still Waters Run Deep"; or claimed that the charming sentiment in "Old Love Letters" was akin in form and feeling to Gilbert's "Sweethearts."

Despite the fact, for example, that a certain special reviewer was proverbially harsh in his judgments of Mr. Howard, hinting that "One of Our Girls" (1885) leaned upon "A Scrap of Paper" in its third act, and upon "The School for Scandal" in its fourth act, should one follow those reviews, there would

BRONSON HOWARD (1842–1908)

For complete list of plays, see Moses' "Representative Plays by American Dramatists", Vol. III. A few important ones here given.

Saratoga.	Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York, December 21, 1870.	
The Banker's Daughter (being a revision of "Lilian's Last Love").	Union Square Theatre, New York, September 30, 1878.	
The Young Mrs. Winthrop.	Madison Square Theatre, New York, October 9, 1882.	
The Henrietta.	Union Square Theatre, New York, September 26, 1887.	
Shenandoah.	Star Theatre, New York, September 9, 1889.	
Aristocracy.	Palmer's Theatre, New York, November 14, 1892.	
The American Drama.	By Bronson Howard.	*Sunday Magazine*, October 7, 1906. Reproduced in Moses' "Representative Plays", Vol. III.
The Autobiography of a Play.	By Bronson Howard.	*Dramatic Museum of Columbia University*, New York, 1914. "Papers on Play-Making." No. 2, series 1.
In Memoriam.	Addresses delivered at Memorial Meeting.	Issued by American Dramatists Club.

BRONSON HOWARD (1842–1908) *Continued*		
Bronson Howard.	By Brander Matthews.	*North American Review*, 188: 504–513, 1908. (This essay is in Matthews' "Gateway to Literature." New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1912.)
Drama in War Time.	By Eleanor Eustace.	*Green Book Album*, 4: 776–785.
The Banker's Daughter.	By James L. Ford.	*Munsey*, 34: 122, 199.
Bronson Howard.	By J. Rankin Towse.	*Book Buyer*, 16: 113–117, March, 1898.
Life on the Stage.	By Clara Morris.	Chapter on "Saratoga." New York: McClure, Phillips. 1902.

be detected that, with the appearance of each new play by Mr. Howard, increasing credit and respect were bestowed upon him. This was largely due to the maturing of the dramatist's touch — to the surety of his technique.

To his feminine interest, Mr. Howard added a repartee which came from close observation of small detail. At first, in such a piece as "Saratoga", and later, in "One of Our Girls", the style bordered on the frivolous. It seemed that there was but one way for him to picture the American girl: by making her, amidst the conservatism of English convention, a bold, frank, "natural" type, surprising everyone with her freedom, her boisterousness. There was little of the intensive life to be detected in her struggles, in her marital misunderstandings, unless we except "The Young Mrs. Winthrop."

The formula of imported drama was used by Mr. Howard; in order to win his battle, he was obliged to compromise somewhere. The formula prescribed duels and French indiscretions; it necessitated the American characters being lavish with money. A certain grace was bestowed upon the feminine type, but otherwise the manner of depiction was the same as that used by Taylor in his character portrayal of *Asa Trenchard.*

The social amenities, the comedies and tragedies of smart set life are to-day very much as they were yesterday. We find as many of the *nouveau riche*, anxious to pepper conversation with French phrases, as many of the so-called aristocracy boasting of association with titled folk; and there are still to be seen the destitute foreign noblemen — mere fortune-hunters such as Mr. Howard introduced into "Aristocracy" and "Kate." Snobbery has lost none of its rampant coarseness. Yet we have outgrown this cartoon, this farce element, in depicting American condition on the stage; we seek for less of the incongruous.

Wall Street is just as potent a factor in the shattering of homes as it was when "The Henrietta" was first produced; but the framework of social drama, of the problem play, is now more solid, and less prone to be shaped by the caprice of external incident. Mr. Howard, despite the transitory chat of his dialogue, impressed one with the feeling that beneath the surface incident there lay a very distinct idea — a much more substantial view of life than his execution would lead us to believe. His criticism of American condition was always thorough and just, and his culture sense was so keen that it is surprising to find how little his plays reflect the solid character of his intellect. His dramas were mostly received with enthusiasm, netting him a comfortable fortune. Yet, regarding their permanence there is doubt, for the very reason that they are cast in a mold so easily discarded, a mold which held only the froth of manners.

As a worker, Mr. Howard was always zealous and painstaking. His manuscripts indicated that labor and sacrifice are the dramatist's watchwords. Let a doubt as to effective-

ness once possess him, and he went to any amount of trouble to overcome the scenic difficulty. The well-thumbed volumes on the Civil War in his library were evidence of his care in detail while planning "Shenandoah", the first draft of which was a network of emendations.

He wrote and rewrote a scene in "One of Our Girls" six times before he could prove to his own satisfaction that the original way was the only way for his particular purpose. The lecture he delivered at Harvard University, in 1886, applied the general laws of drama to certain alterations made in "The Banker's Daughter." His object was to show the student that whatever changes of primary importance were made by him affected other details in preceding and succeeding situations. A drama is an organism, with relative spatial values fluctuating according to dynamic principles. Mechanical effectiveness has its constructive equation, and character must develop consistently along lines of evolution and of life.

But Mr. Howard, while illustrating these laws by means of the changes in his piece, also too clearly revealed in that lecture a distinct danger underlying the stagecraft of his day — a danger bequeathed us by the French, and engrafted by Robertson and Taylor upon English drama and American drama as well — a danger counteracted by the Ibsen technique, with its vital ideas. The caprice of incident was more thought of than the humanity of individuals; artifice therefore largely took the place of art. "One of the most important laws of dramatic construction," said Mr. Howard, before the Harvard audience, "might thus be formulated: If you want a particular thing done, choose a character to do it that an audience will naturally expect to do it. In 'The Banker's Daughter' I wanted a man to fall in love with my heroine after she was a married woman, and, of course, I chose a French Count for the purpose."

We now ask again, in view of all this activity, by what right was Mr. Howard called Dean of the American dramatists? He always had the interest of native playwrights at heart; he fought for them unceasingly, even as ardently as

Mark Twain did for the author in the copyright agitations, making appeal for proper protection of plays as early as 1879; he founded for his craft a permanent organization, known as the Dramatists Club (1891). But more than that, he established the *fact* of the American Drama's existence, and stood ready to render encouragement to the younger generation. Unlike "The Master Builder", he hastened the newer school, always gracious and always helpful.

We emphasize in our literary histories the importance of such writers as Bret Harte, who preserved a native flavor in the short story, dependent upon native life. The American idea in literature has largely been subservient to local interest and local need. Politically, socially, spiritually, and economically, locality has governed our literary expression, and has been externalized on the stage. Save in isolated instances, *idea* in American literature has in no way equalled vividness of local condition. While Mr. Howard's local claim was harmed by his manner of construction, he nevertheless, like Robertson and Taylor, swung the pendulum across the dial of contemporary life, and reflected the conventional phases of contemporary society. He recognized that Boker in Philadelphia had done no ordinary work; that American Drama, from the Revolution, was no insignificant quantity, however varying the quality. What was needed seemed to be *confidence* in native ability and in native discernment; what was needed proved to be a local dramatic *market* for modern wares. Mr. Howard was the founder of such a market. It was confidence on his part that cleared the way for the present. And, by right of this struggle, dramatic history should stamp him, as others in his family have been stamped, as *pioneer* in his particular field.

Shortly after Bronson Howard's death, at Avon-by-the-Sea, New Jersey, on August 4, 1908, the American Dramatists Club appointed a committee, composed of personal and professional friends of the dramatist, to arrange for a memorial meeting. Such men as George Ade, David Belasco, William De Mille, Harrison Grey Fiske, Daniel Frohman, William Gillette, Augustus Pitou, Richard A. Purdy, John Philip Sousa,

and Augustus Thomas planned the occasion. As a result of this public tribute, a volume, "In Memoriam", was shortly afterwards issued, and in this one is able to measure Mr. Howard's value as a man of the theatre. It is unfortunate that his letters are not included, for his correspondence was always marked by the soundness and saneness of his thinking, his earnest endeavor to reach the right, unprejudiced attitude.

He was an ideal American, as Augustus Thomas said of him, despite the fact that he was so often accused by the press of being British in his observations and his tastes. And, in the true sense of the word, he was an American dramatist, because he dealt with the details of American life. Brander Matthews has pointed out that he wrote at a time when the theatre was changing in its physical demands: when we were passing from the platform stage to the picture-frame stage. Dion Boucicault had been the exponent of the former, Howard was now to be an adherent of the latter.

He was a practical worker in the then existent theatre, and he knew his playhouse. He was only half right, I think, in likening the dramatist's craft to that of the mechanical engineer. Construction is a large part of the job of writing a play, but it is not the whole of drama. He could admire Ibsen's deftness in handling plot, but he could not see the positive intellectual worth of Ibsen, he could not justify the sombreness of Ibsen, — his own conception of the theatre being founded on the belief that it is only through dealing with the noble side of manhood and womanhood that a dramatist will inspire ennobling influences. Toward the close of his life he was inclined to deprecate the increasing soberness of the realistic theatre.

But he was a respecter of dramatic construction, and came by instinct to understand what others nowadays attempt to draw from books of dramatic technique. He always had a refreshing way of stating his beliefs. In his Harvard lecture, he spoke of the necessity for submitting unconditionally to the laws of dramatic truth. He said, "Keep in mind the historical case of Stevenson. When a member of the British Parliament asked him, concerning his new-fangled invention, whether it would not be very awkward if a cow was on the

track when a train came along, he answered, 'Very ark'art, indeed, — for the cow.' . . . Even if you feel sometimes that your genius — that's always the word in the secret vocabulary of our own minds — even if your genius seems to be hampered by these dramatic laws, resign yourself to them at once, with that simple form of Christian resignation so beautifully illustrated by the poor German woman on her deathbed. Her husband being asked, afterward, if she were resigned to her death, responded with that touching and earnest recognition of eternal law, 'Mein Gott, she had to be!' "

Addressing the Lambs Club on the trash which deluged the American stage, and on the so-called lost dramatists of America, Mr. Howard took special care to stress his belief that the hope of the future lay largely in the worker who obeyed the dictates of the theatre rather than the dictates of literature. All countries had to witness the large proportion of inferior drama to the very few masterpieces. "If it were not for dramatic trash," he declared, "neither theatres nor the profession of acting would exist." The papers were full of talk, he contended, about the lost dramatists who should have come from the ranks of the novelists, poets, and short-story writers of the country. But, analyzing Mrs. Inchbald's collection of English plays, he could find no support from England that the plays worth while out of one hundred and twenty-five were those written by other than the professional dramatist. And he ended by saying, "The American Theatre must develop its own literature, through professional dramatists, good, bad and indifferent, as the theatre of every other country has done. In other words, in looking forward to an American Dramatic Literature, we must look toward the theatre, not away from it."

The sanity of Howard's attitude did more to impress the manager of his time with the value of native work than any other thing. He might succumb to the conventions of his day — which were the conventions of the British and French stage — but his mind was on his own country. When he took his "Drum-Taps" — later to be the inspiration for his "Shenandoah" — to one of these managers, it was returned

hastily because it dealt with the Civil War — an American theme. "Now, if it were the Crimea," the manager suggested, with rising inflection, as though it might easily be rewritten as such, "there would be some hope for it." I have heard this attitude variously attributed to A. M. Palmer and to Lester Wallack, but either one would do, — for they were both typical managers of the time, and the rising tide of local interest did not seem to dawn upon either of them until this dramatist made a stand. Brander Matthews reports Wallack's confusion, thus expressed:

I used to get along very well, with the latest London success, and a new play now and then by Dion or by John [meaning Boucicault and Brougham], and an old comedy or two. But now I really don't know what they want!

The fact of the matter was: a new generation was coming, and it was Howard who was knocking at the door. What he wanted was a recognition of his presence as an American.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

James A. Herne and the Realistic Drama

I

William Winter, with his customary disrespect for the modern drama, seemed to take a special delight in belittling the work of James A. Herne. He could not countenance in his plays that "prosy literalism" which was what simple realism seemed to him. He accused Herne of tinkering with other people's ideas, of giving the stage "transformed English characters" rather than native Americans, of being hysterical rather than true to simple emotion. So blind, indeed, was Winter, that in unfounded generalization — which seemed to have behind what he wrote a personal animosity — he accused Herne of adding nothing to American Drama, but of remaining a playwright of "respectable mediocrity."

It is difficult to dissuade those who believe in Winter's judgment that not a word of this is true. For none of Herne's plays are in print, and some of the best, from a realistic standpoint, are destroyed forever. Furthermore, it is difficult to recreate the atmosphere of the California period in which Herne received his first impulses as a playwright, a stage director, and an actor. If the fashions of those times could be adequately impressed upon this generation of students in the drama, Herne would loom up as one of the most commanding figures in the American Drama of the eighteen-nineties. There was plenty of good acting out in San Francisco in the days when Herne and Belasco were brought together in management and play writing: all the stars of the golden

period of acting made their pilgrimages across the plains and mountains to the West; and Salt Lake City, Virginia City, and the City of the Golden Gate have a theatre history which embraces many picturesque moments and many vital incidents in the records of the American Drama. These two men were steeped in the romanticism and flashy melodrama of the time; they acted and saw others act, and had their own standards. Winter raved at Belasco's tribute to Herne's *Rip;* he lauded above it Jefferson's *Rip* as the complete embodiment of Irving's hero. But there are other critics as competent as Winter to claim that Jefferson fell far below the graphic conception of James H. Hackett's *Rip* and of Herne's.

Be that as it may, I wish here merely to warn the reader, who meets with such blind statements, that Winter had no understanding of those realistic elements Herne tried — and others agree with me — so successfully and so significantly, for his era, to put into his plays. Read Winter on Ibsen, on Hauptmann, Sudermann, Maeterlinck, on the best of Pinero, Shaw — you will find sufficiently marked his limited vision, his inability to adjust his sympathies to the changing times. For what does he write in one place? "There is more true *drama* in Wills's 'Olivia', Young's 'Jim the Penman', Thomas's 'The Witching Hour', and McLellan's 'Leah Kleschna'. . . than there is in a round dozen of the works of Ibsen."

I am not making a statement against Mr. Winter for the purpose of belittling his long service in the cause of worthy drama for the American Theatre. His early beginnings as a dramatic critic bring us very near the period which I have written about in my chapter detailing the critical attitude of the "Fabulous Forties"— before and after. That he failed to see the significance of Mr. Herne at any moment, save when he played in pieces remindful of "Olivia" and "Jim the Penman", was his limitation; that he failed to see how absolutely alone Herne was, in the bed-rock treatment of homely situation, indicates merely that Winter preferred his drama highly colored with violent emotion, or else in the form of classic poetry which admitted of the classic type of acting.

II

The position W. D. Howells occupies in American literature is an original one. The Howells impulse in letters was something brand new in the days when James A. Herne went to Boston. It was Howells who began drawing readers away from stereotyped formulas of romanticism; and, while later his practise served to create a realistic *rut* in fiction, he nevertheless enforced the growing belief in the richness of the land which held the nation's common, average life; and he proceeded to show that truth was in the soil and much truer perhaps than the artificial condition which never possesses any intimate relation with the fibre of the community.

This point of view struck Herne with force, and he began to put it into practise. Yet he has never been given full credit for his pioneer efforts, — with the examples before him of Howells, whom he knew personally, and of Ibsen, whom he knew by reading, — to apply to American themes for the stage, this realistic treatment, of which in this country Howells was the arch-exponent in fiction. "Mr. Howells's principle is truth," writes Mr. Firkins. "He believes in the transference of life to the page with as little alteration as is compatible with the difference between being and discourse."

To any one who has read the scripts of "Margaret Fleming", of "Griffith Davenport", of "Shore Acres", there are moments in all these plays that fit this method, — life suggested with little show of art to blur the impression; life that requires only a slight rhythm of discourse to reveal an infinitude of poignant struggle; and, since Mr. Herne himself acted in all his plays, a method of interpretation which made the difference between "being and discourse" almost nil.

In his book on "Criticism and Fiction", Mr. Howells, speaking of the imitative instinct of the average American writer, says truthfully that in general "he is instructed to idealize his personages, that is, to take the lifelikeness out of them, and put the booklikeness into them." And he adds furthermore, as a hopeful sign, that "now we are beginning to see and to say that no author is an authority, except in those moments

when he held his ear close to Nature's lips and caught her very accents." In other words, is it not true that an author is *real* who faithfully interprets the environment with which he is most familiar; who sees clearly through a mystical belief in the godhead of the human being? In this respect, no one can lay claim to higher realization of the term than Mr. Herne himself. I am sure that were his plays printed, even though they might seem strange to the ear in their sentiments, their melodramatic passions, the rhythms of life itself would grip at moments with such force as to give us pause to think that they were written between 1890 and 1899.

Thus considered, Mr. Herne represents the most original strain in the American Drama of his day. Let us grant that in his plots he invented conventional situations which almost hid the fundamental sincerity of his simple characterization. Let us acknowledge that his comedy sometimes bordered on the "low" comedy of old, although, in the last analysis, his humor was of the kindliest, and the depths from which it arose the most human. Let us furthermore understand fully that, having acted in the "old school", having assumed rôles of diverse melodramatic range, his invention as author was often prompted by the memory of those parts, and their effective handling on the stage.

Yet, notwithstanding all this, Mr. Herne is entitled to the highest consideration, because of the fact that, in the midst of romantic, melodramatic, and old-fashioned tragic conceptions — which then found favor in the eyes of the American public, — he put his ear close to the heart of the common life, and drew from the most ordinary experiences and circumstances the stark poetry of a simple, fundamental existence.

What strikes one as most characteristic in Mr. Herne's manuscript plays is the wonderful clarity of vision which, through the medium of the most matter-of-fact details, through the power of clear and direct expression, always raised the common level of daily existence to a plane of the most tragic drama on the one hand, and to the realm of the most genial, warmhearted, and amusing rural comedy on the other. It is not over-exaggeration to claim this distinction

for Herne, because these qualities accentuate themselves amidst glaring faults of technique; but these faults only add the more to the sincerity of certain scenes which are among the high places in our American Drama.

His work is another illustration that the poignancy of our soil, of our native character, — the primal sweep of our American life — is to be found between great cities, not in them; that there are more native stamina, more distinctive folk passion in the small community than in the large. In some respects Herne's plays are folk dramas of the best kind. The abnormal community, where a mixture of all nations makes the civic body, does not encourage such interest as he showed in simple people and their daily lives.

When Mr. Herne's attention was drawn away from the melodrama with which he met favor, he seemed to have sensed almost intuitively the modern movement in world literature. He became suddenly an avaricious reader of the modern authors. Some would say that the influences which bore upon him at the time he wrote "Margaret Fleming" and "Griffith Davenport" were imported from such men as Ibsen and Tolstoy. If this were true, I would rather relate the Herne dramas, as Norman Hapgood suggested, to some of the German dramas of the time, if only Mr. Herne had known these German dramas. But his range of reading was limited. He saw the inward light of this realism which was claiming letters. He may be said to have been endowed with that luminosity of spiritual vision which, even at an advanced age, kept him thoroughly attuned to progressive movements in art and politics. He was an ardent supporter of the economic theories of Henry George.

III

Mr. Herne was born on February 1, 1839, at Cohoes, New York, of Irish parentage, his father, Patrick Herne, being a tradesman of the town. He received the bare rudiments of an education, for he was obliged to earn a livelihood at an early age. He had the usual yearning of the average boy to go to sea, and to the day of his death he possessed an insatiable love

of the water. That faint youthful dream of slipping to sea in a merchantman became realized only in so far as to sit aboard his yacht in later years, or else to write inimitable letters to his daughter Dorothy — the "Captain Perry" of his heart — and sign them "The Pirate."

Rebellion against conditions did result, however, in Mr. Herne's running away, and joining a theatrical company, playing at the Adelphi Theatre, in Troy, and here it was that, during April, 1859, he appeared in "Uncle Tom's Cabin." On the authority of Clapp, however, it is said that his first appearance was made in an amateur performance of "Toodles", which took place a short while previous to this at Schenectady. At the Adelphi he supported James B. Roberts, assuming such characters as *Horatio*, *Cassio*, and *Bassanio*. His uncle was the treasurer of the house.

That Herne was equal to any emergency may be inferred from the fact that one evening, when Roberts appeared as *Richard III*, the young actor was cast for the three rôles of *Tressel*, *Oxford*, and *Buckingham*. He was indefatigable in his ambition, although at the time he must have been sorely pressed for the necessary income which would supply him with a theatrical wardrobe. For, during one summer, he returned to a brush factory in the neighborhood of Cohoes, working away to eke out his small salary, at the same time, with the artful enthusiasm of a young man, keeping his father in ignorance of his true profession.

His next engagement was at the Gaiety Theatre, in Albany; and from there he went to the Holliday Street Theatre, in Baltimore, which was under the management of Ford. There he remained until 1864. "As a matter of historic interest," wrote Mr. Herne, "it may be well to mention that I spoke the first line ever delivered on the stage of Ford's Tenth Street Theatre, Washington, the theatre in which Abraham Lincoln was shot." In 1869, he was for a period manager of the New York Grand Opera House; and thereafter he toured with Susan Denning along the Pacific slope. Then followed several seasons as leading man with Lucille Western, during which engagement he assumed such parts as *Bill Sykes* and *Sir*

Francis Levison, succeeding E. L. Davenport in the repertoire rôles. Mr. Herne's first wife was Miss Helen Western, whom he married on July 17, 1866.

When the actor finally went to Baldwin's Theatre, in San Francisco, it was under the management of Thomas Maguire. He served as stage director, and as well assumed an infinite number of rôles, among those to be remembered because of their human value being his Dickens characterizations of *Daniel Peggotty* and *Captain Cuttle*. It was while there, that he met David Belasco, a much younger man than Herne. The two influenced each other and profitted by their differing abilities. The experienced actor in Herne reacted upon the youthful impetuosity of Belasco; while it was the latter who suggested to Herne his own powers as a writer of plays. It was in those days that the two collaborated. Herne once confessed in a lecture that the stereotyped drama of this period did not appeal to him. It was the play of plot, of hero, heroine, and villain, of virtue triumphant, of artificial situations and endings. The heroic drama fell upon unsympathetic ears, even though Mr. Herne played the Romeos, Claude Melnottes, Armand Duvals, and the Benedicks, Cliffords, and Petruchios of the "Standard Dramas." It was the domestic play, the simpler plot that caught his fancy. "The more direct the talk," he confessed, "the more earnest I became." Here was the author of "Shore Acres" long before he began to write.

From now on the career of James A. Herne may be considered entirely in its literary development and from the angle of his personal expansion. For, peculiarly, vigorous as he was in his profession as an actor, theatre events in his life were not so significant as his intimate association with a very few persons who had much to do with his artistic beliefs and his intellectual predilections. He was married, for the second time, to Miss Katherine Corcoran, on April 3, 1878. The impress of her inspiration was soon seen upon him. She it was who definitely started him on his career as a dramatist; she it was who gave him courage to go on in those dark hours when, having written "Margaret Fleming" and "Griffith Davenport", he found managers looking askance at him

because of the kind of realistic play he wrote. He was paying the penalty for cutting himself aloof from melodrama and seeking the truth in the commonplace.

To the very end, Mr. Herne acted and produced plays; he loved to talk of his inspirations in the theatre, Forrest and Davenport being his ideals of the past. He wrote pleasantly of "Old Stock Days in the Theatre", but, being an evolutionist at heart, his own technique as an actor would indicate that his devotion to the "palmy" times did not hinder him from developing a method far removed from the work of his idols.

From his career thus barely sketched, there are a few significant factors to be stressed. While at Baldwin's Theatre, in San Francisco, Mr. Herne came under the influence of the Boucicault drama and of that type of melodrama which was represented by such a success as "The Danicheffs." So that it is not surprising to find "Hearts of Oak", "The Minute Men", and "Drifting Apart" tinged with those flamboyant emotions which were lacking in subtlety. In "Shore Acres", during the scene in which *Uncle Nat* struggles with *Martin*, in his effort to light the signal lamp, the sensational is very much in evidence; but the unerring art of Mr. Herne saved him from the intense glare of melodrama. He understood thoroughly the balance between tension and quietude, and there is no bit of stage writing more natural, more cheerful, and more real than the act which succeeded this violent one in "Shore Acres", *Uncle Nat* preparing the Christmas stockings. Those who are fortunate enough to recollect the wonderful naturalness of Mr. Herne's acting, will always refer to the final curtain of this play, where *Uncle Nat*, left alone on the stage, by the very flexibility of his facial expression, depicted the full beauty of his character, as he closed up the room for the night, put out the lamps, and, lighted only by the glow from the fire in the stove, slowly left the room as the cuckoo clock struck twelve. Such work, of which Mr. Herne as an actor was capable, is close to Maeterlinck's conception of what *static* drama should be, — the drama of little action and immense interaction of the forces of destiny.

After seeing "Shore Acres" in 1893, Henry George wrote:

JAMES A. HERNE (1839–1901)

Hearts of Oak (first produced under the name of "Chums").	Baldwin's Theatre, San Francisco, Cal., September 9, 1879.	
Minute Men.	Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, Pa., April 5, 1886.	
Drifting Apart (first called "Mary, the Fisherman's Child").	People's Theatre, New York, May 7, 1888.	
Margaret Fleming.	Lynn Theatre, Lynn, Mass., July 4, 1890. Revived, Chicago, Ill., January 29, 1907.	
Shore Acres (formerly called "The Hawthornes").	McVicker's Theatre, Chicago, Ill., May 23, 1892.	
Griffith Davenport.	Lafayette Square Theatre, Washington, D. C., January 16, 1899.	
Sag Harbor.	Park Theatre, Boston, Mass., October 23, 1899.	
Mr. and Mrs. Herne.	By Hamlin Garland.	*Arena*, October, 1891, 543–560.
Old Stock Days in the Theatre.	By James A. Herne.	*Arena*, 6 : 401, September, 1892.
Mask or Mirror.	By B. O. Flower.	*Arena*, 8 : 304, 1893.
Truth for Truth's Sake.*	By James A. Herne.	*Arena*, 17 : 361–370, February, 1897.

[*This was used as a lecture before the Home Congress at Cotillion Hall, Boston, October 27, 1896. On January 31, 1897, Mr. Herne appeared in the pulpit of the First Congregational Church, Kansas City, and delivered a lecture on "The Theatre as It Is."]

JAMES A. HERNE (1839–1901) *Continued*

James A. Herne: Actor, Dramatist, and Man.	Appreciations by Hamlin Garland, J. J. Enneking, and B. O. Flower.	*Arena*, 26 : 282–292, September, 1901.
James A. Herne in "Griffith Davenport."	By Marco Tiempo.	*Arena*, 22 : 375, September, 1899.
Rev. Griffith Davenport.	By John Corbin.	*Harper's Weekly*, 43 : 139, 213.
,,	By John D. Barry.	*Literary World*, Boston, 30 : 57.
,,	By W. D. Howells.	*Literature*, 4 : 265–266.
Margaret Fleming.	By W. D. Howells.	*Harper's Magazine*, Editor's Study, 83 : 478, August, 1891.
Herne and his New Play, "Sag Harbor."	By F. Wayne.	*National Magazine*, Boston, 11 : 393.
The American Stage (3d article).	By William Archer.	*Pall Mall Magazine* (London), 20 : 23–37.
Players of the Present.	By John Bouvé Clapp and Edwin Francis Edgett.	Dunlap Society, pt. 1, 1899, 148.
The Stage in America.	By Norman Hapgood.	Chapter III. — "Our Two Ablest Dramatists." New York : The Macmillan Co., 1901.
James A. Herne.	By Lewis C. Strang.	In "Famous Actors of To-day in America", Chap. II. Boston : L. C. Page, 1900.

I cannot too much congratulate you upon your success. You have done what you have sought to do — made a play pure and noble, that people will come to hear. You have taken the strength of realism and added to it the strength that comes from the wider truth that realism fails to see; and, in the simple portrayal of homely life, touched a *universal* chord. . . . Who, save you, can bring out the character you have created — a character which to others, as to me, must have recalled the tender memory of some sweet saint of God.

Having made a comfortable fortune with the success of "Hearts of Oak", Mr. Herne's progress, up to the time of "Shore Acres", was marked by persistent opposition and lack of financial success. This initial play of his, which, when first produced at Baldwin's Theatre, on September 9, 1879, was known as "Chums", was, in many of its details, based on "The Mariner's Compass", by Henry Leslie. Its main plot was used again in "Sag Harbor"; and, despite the fact that it contained many stereotyped romantic speeches, it displayed a gift which Mr. Herne possessed to a marked degree — the gift of simplicity, which never deserted him, no matter how old-fashioned and unoriginal some of his scenes might be.

There are countless plays and stories like "Hearts of Oak", dealing with a marriage between a girl and her guardian, which at first is overclouded by the fact that the girl loves another, but which finally ripens into a full happiness and a satisfactory ending. One cannot quite accept those heroes of fiction or drama, however mature and settled, who would give up their wives because of a conscience. Such touches often occur in Mr. Herne's plays, in accord with the fashion of the time.

But these incongruities were more than overbalanced by Mr. Herne's inimitable handling of the commonplace in life. He was able to breathe into his dialogue those small, playful expressions that lighten up the whole character. At one moment serious, he never allowed himself — except in the case of "Margaret Fleming" — to subject his audiences to unrelieved strain. The papers, commenting on his so-called

JAMES A. HERNE.

"One of the most commanding figures in the American Drama of the eighteen-nineties."

domestic dramas, showed surprise over his effective use of the commonplace. They were not accustomed to see on the stage the little happenings of home life, the glorification of those situations which abound in comradeship, and those quiet scenes with a baby which are successful only when the actor possesses that great art which alone knows how to deal with quiet detail.

"Hearts of Oak" exhibited the influence of Dickens in its character portrayal. Judged by the standards that we now have in these times of ultra-realism, the sentiment was old-fashioned, certain speeches pointed a moral rather than adorned the tale. No one, however, could ever accuse Mr. Herne of being a blindly prejudiced pleader. He had an evenly balanced sense of fairness, and he looked on all sides of a question with compassion and sympathy. He took sides; a dramatist should not remain unmoved by the validity of his case; if he does — as Galsworthy in a sense did when writing "Justice" — he suggests an emotional coldness which has a chilling effect on his audience. When he wrote "The Rev. Griffith Davenport", he showed his sanity in a high degree; the story dealing with a circuit rider of the South during the storm and stress period of slavery and war, he could have fallen into the error of an average dramatist, and handled the subject by falsifying historic truth and thrusting forward personal prejudices. He did nothing of the kind: he gave us sympathy for both sides — the preacher pitted against his own family, the spirit of Lincoln against the moral weakness of a losing economic system, a national panorama amidst a domestic drama. This, one of the very greatest, if not the greatest, of our war plays, was among the Herne manuscripts destroyed by fire.

"Drifting Apart" was regarded as one of the most powerful temperance sermons ever put on the stage, unless we except the successful melodrama, "Drink." Yet there is little of distinction in the actual script of the piece, save the suggested possibilities in the acting that were so marked on its first presentation at the People's Theatre, in New York, on May 7, 1888. Mrs. Herne assumed the rôle of *Mary Miller*, and

infused it with a subtle interpretation of art for truth's sake.

Hamlin Garland spoke of it in these terms: "It was so utterly opposed to the tragedy of the legitimate. Here was tragedy that appalled and fascinated like the great fact of living. . . . The fourth act was like one of Millet's paintings."

Mr. Herne's lines of life were so cast that he was denied the advantages of the student, although he possessed the avid mind of the scholar. Without any apparent effort on his part, he absorbed the best literature, and it was an easy matter for him to reach the heart of any subject which attracted his attention. Although he set himself down to write a melodrama when he began "The Minute Men", and although, because of this very self-consciousness on his part, he failed in his attempt, he was nevertheless successful in attaining a certain atmosphere of historical reality, akin to the true Revolutionary spirit. This was more solidly and more artistically accomplished in "The Rev. Griffith Davenport",[1] Mr. Herne's best contribution to dramatic literature, however much we might claim that "Sag Harbor" contained his most finished writing; it had a balance of truth and art, which is lacking in "Shenandoah" and "The Heart of Maryland." The point of view is one which might be said to be as much Southern as Northern. The principle of slavery was antagonistic to Mr. Herne's social philosophy; and, should a bias be found at all in this play, it would lie in his interpretation of *duty* as confronting *Griffith Davenport. Davenport's* struggle was not so much that of a Southerner who was torn between his duty to State and his duty to country, as it was the conception of Mr. Herne, whose idea of duty was wholly from the standpoint of country, and not from that of State. The atmosphere of the drama was very successfully obtained through the handling of the simple details of Southern life. Perhaps there was an over-accentuation of the darky characteristics, but they were not the customary antics of the stage minstrel or of the conventional Southern "hand." As a playwright, Mr. Herne infused into his darkies that same strain of

[1] Based on Helen H. Gardner's novel, "The Unofficial Patriot."

humanity which he is said to have put into a Negro character part he once played in the early days, with such determined and realistic villainy.

IV

In the Spring of 1899, William Archer saw "Griffith Davenport." What he felt then was described later in the London *Tribune* (May 26, 1906). He said:

The curtain rose on a quiet domestic scene on a Virginia plantation, and I was instantly struck by the skill with which the old-fashioned dignity of the environment was brought home to us, along with the atmosphere and aroma of the South. Character after character appeared, and as each one began to develop in action, . . . I asked, "Who is this actor?" "I never heard of him," was the invariable reply. Except Herne himself and his wife, all the actors were quite unknown people; yet such was his skill as a "scene-instructor" that I took each new figure for a personage who must surely have made his or her mark on the stage. The second act was what we should call melodramatic in character, dealing with the pursuit and rescue of a runaway slave; but even here everything was done simply and without exaggeration. The third act, which passed in a sitting-room in Washington, was placed on the stage with a perfection that would have done credit to the Comédie Française, and acted with a quiet naturalness from which the Comédie Française might have learnt a lesson. I felt throughout that here I was in the presence of what I had come to seek, and had not found elsewhere — original American art. And America, to its indelible discredit, failed to recognize it.

V

It is significant to obtain Mr. Herne's own estimate of his different plays. We find him analyzing the cause for this success and for that failure; we hear him making a confession that although "Hearts of Oak", in its dealing with Marblehead folk, was a new departure, since it had neither hero nor villain, it was crude in construction. With a simple *naïveté*,

he recognized in "The Minute Men", with its Paul Revere's ride and its Battle of Lexington, a step nearer the truth; while in its character of *Dorothy Foxglove* it afforded a "glorious" rôle for Mrs. Herne. He was frank enough to confess that in "Drifting Apart", his story of Gloucester fishermen, based on "Mary, the Fisherman's Child", there was displayed a weak comedy element in the introduction of the stage soubrette and the funny man. Even in "Margaret Fleming" he evidently felt that there were didactic spots in the dialogue. So that, by this self-criticism of the artist, we are able, to a certain extent, to catch glimpses of the whole-souled sincerity of the man, who sought truth externally, simply because he saw clearly its spirit. As he has written: "Art is a personal expression of life. The finer the form and color and the larger the truth, the higher the art. . . . Art is universal; it can be claimed by no man, creed, race, or time, and all art is good."

The change that came over Mr. Herne after having produced "Drifting Apart" was coincident with an intellectual and spiritual change affecting both himself and his wife. They were mentally receptive of new ideas. They were following, in Huxley, in Spencer, in Howells, in Tolstoy, those tendencies which, attracting one to higher conceptions of ethical duty and of social justice, brought one's viewpoint nearer to the common life. Mrs. Herne was mentally keen. Hamlin Garland writes of her: "To see her radiant with intellectual enthusiasm, one has but to start a discussion of the nebular hypothesis, or to touch upon the atomic theory, or doubt the inconceivability of matter. She is perfectly oblivious to space and time if she can get some one to discuss Flammarion's supersensuous world of force, Mr. George's theory of land-holding, or Spencer's law of progress."

The next artistic effort that Mr. Herne put his hand to was by no means fraught with elements of popularity. It was truth laid bare, with no gloss of romanticism about it, however much it might be saturated with feeling; souls stark naked in their sin, and in their vigorous dealing with sin. One marvels, after having read "Margaret Fleming", what there is of tangible literary value in such a story, for one

undoubtedly feels its value. It proves nothing, it has no direct intent; it is a segment of life painted with no idea of gaining art effects, but showing how very close to life one's vision may be. The realism is almost pitiless in its consequences; it is almost photographic in its detail. It is the commonplace story of the man who goes wrong, and whose illegitimate child is nurtured by his wife after she has discovered his transgressions. It is the close tragedy of a woman's struggle to estimate at its full worth the animal instinct in man.

For the student of American Drama, Mr. Herne's activity as a writer falls easily into two classes. We may narrow our consideration down, so as to include "Margaret Fleming" and "The Rev. Griffith Davenport" on the one hand, with "Shore Acres" and "Sag Harbor" on the other; the former representing his realism, and the latter representing — if we must designate him by a term — his rural characteristics, which were more vital than those of Denman Thompson, as seen in "The Old Homestead."[1] When "Margaret Fleming" was ready for presentation, the dramatist found himself in a peculiar position, for no manager dared risk capital on a piece so freed from what the public was usually accustomed to, and so devoid of a happy ending. Likewise, there were certain situations which appeared to shock the conventional taste. It was at this time that Hamlin Garland began to take that interest in the Herne family which rapidly ripened into the deepest friendship. He and Mr. Howells seemed to recognize the rare originality which lay in the simple style of Mr. Herne's work. Even in "Drifting Apart", melodramatic though it was, there were certain direct, incisive, and simple passages of writing that partook of the very highest and best qualities in realism.

So that, naturally, "Margaret Fleming"[2] appealed to these two literary men, who became so far interested as not only to

[1] Mr. Thompson (1833–1911) was not prolific. "The Old Homestead" was originally called "Joshua Whitcomb."

[2] "Shore Acres" was really being evolved by Mr. Herne before the writing of "Margaret Fleming."

suggest the idea, but to further the scheme of leasing Chickering Hall, in Boston, and of presenting the play to an intellectual assemblage which was very difficult to gather for a theatre performance. The piece ran for several weeks, but it was a financial failure, although the press recognized a certain subtle force, a certain plain and vital power which were rarely seen upon the stage. This was in the year 1890, when Ibsen was practically unknown to the American theatregoing public, when the slightest deviation from the accepted conventions of morality was regarded as *bold*. It was this attitude of mind more than anything which the play itself challenged, that involved it in such disastrous consequences. Mr. Howells wrote:

The power of this story, as presented in Mr. Herne's everyday phrase, and in the naked simplicity of Mrs. Herne's acting of the wife's part, was terrific. It clutched the heart. It was common; it was pitilessly plain; it was ugly, but it was true, and it was irresistible. At times, the wife preached, and that was bad; there were passages of the grossest romanticism in the piece, and yet it was a piece of great realism in its whole effect. This effect, in Boston, where it was produced, was most extraordinary. Probably, no other new play ever drew such audiences there, in the concert hall where it took refuge after being denied a chance at all the theatres. Literature, fashion, religion delegated their representatives to see it, and none saw it without profound impression, so that it became the talk of the whole city wherever cultivated people met.

When the piece was revived at the Art Theatre, in Chicago, during 1907, all of the critics recognized its forcefulness and its serious simplicity, deploring the fact that it had remained in obscurity for so long a time, when in every respect one was justified in regarding it as a high specimen of American dramatic art.

Mr. Herne's next piece, "The Rev. Griffith Davenport",[1] met with the same cold reception, and it is natural to find him becoming somewhat discouraged as to the possibilities of

[1] It was begun in the summer of 1894, and not produced until 1899.

carrying the American public with him along the lines which meant most to him, and which he was best fitted to follow. So he determined thereafter to add popular qualities to his stark realism. Not for a moment could he have discarded his innate ability to deal with simple things; but he drew upon the stock subterfuges of the old school, at times becoming a little over-sentimental, whereas one of the beauties of "Margaret Fleming" was the depth of its tragic sentiment, which overcame its flaws.

The interstices between the completion of his several pieces were filled up by Mr. Herne's acting, and likewise by his excellent stage management, which was always in demand for large productions. There are some who believe that as a stage manager Mr. Herne's influence upon the eighteen-nineties was more marked than as a dramatist. Through kindly guidance and illuminating interpretation, he impressed his methods upon all of the actors who were under his care; and many on the stage to-day regard Mr. Herne as the one force which meant most to them in their careers. But, in the future, Mr. Herne's position will be dependent entirely upon his value as a dramatist.

There are a few facts, leading up to the close of Mr. Herne's life, which have to be noted. After going to Boston, around 1890, he lived in a modest little home at Ashmont, in the suburbs. The failure of "Margaret Fleming" was coincident with a rather unsettled period in the history of literary Boston, a period which — to use Mr. Garland's expression — was marked by a discovery of the fact that to meet success every one had to go to New York. So, about the same time he, Mr. Howells, and Mr. Herne all went to that city. It was not until 1894 that Mr. Herne moved with his family to his estate in Southampton, Long Island, where the dramatist did much of his final writing, and where he was able to satisfy his love of the sea and his thorough enjoyment of home life. At this time one would be sure to note his fondness for the fields and his enthusiasm for tennis and bicycling. Simple of heart and boyish in action, there was nothing so important that he would not spare the time to mend a broken doll for his daughter

Dorothy. Here also he was drawn more and more into interests other than those dealing with drama. His reading became broader, his political opinions became pronounced, in fact so pronounced as to demand his time for public speaking in the interests of Henry George. So ardent was he in his acceptance of the doctrine of free access to the soil, that his theatrical manager at one time advised him to be more careful, inasmuch as his theatre audiences might resent his political views. But Mr. Herne was not a man to fear consequences of this kind. To the day of his death, June 2, 1901, he was an ardent supporter of Bryan.

VI

There are some men born to see clearly, to be zealous for the vital principles of life, the unchangeable, constant truth of the ages; the thoughts and ideas which elevate in the effort to live our highest and best. These are the thoughts which were usually upon the lips of Mr. Herne. He was a man of the present, drawing from the moment what was truest from his standpoint. He loved the theatre, but he was always careful, even in the midst of his stage directions, to call attention to those realistic bits of acting which one identifies with life rather than with the simulation of life.

He took his art seriously;[1] he recognized in it a social force and a civilizing factor. He believed that truth in art was as much within the grasp of the stage as of the pulpit, that the theatre was as much to be upheld in the light of a temple for the work of the dramatist, as a museum was to be considered a civilizing factor in its capacity as temple for the art of the painter. The theatre to him was a place for the upholding of good. He once said: "We must not condemn an art or an institution because a corrupt civilization has affected it." He further said that "the province of the theatre is not to preach objectively, but to teach subjectively." He recognized that an art was vicious only because of the existence of lovers of vicious art. He was broad in his ideas;

[1] Mr. Herne was one of the first actors to make a stand against the binding influence of the Theatrical Syndicate.

his voice was always heard in the cause of liberty — whether political or artistic. He was to a certain extent an individualist, recognizing that the Kingdom of God is within us; yet according to his own words: "No individual can emancipate the race; he cannot even emancipate his own calling. The race must be taught to emancipate itself."

We do not find Mr. Herne afraid to state his own position, to formulate his own belief. What was he spiritually but a firm upholder of the force of deed, over and above creed? As though it were his own declaration of faith, he wrote: "I believe that every human being has a certain amount of divinity — that is, of God — within him; just as much of God as he is capable of holding. And he gives out just as much of that divinity as he is capable of expressing. And I believe that if he were not bound down by unjust social laws, that if he were free, the divinity would grow and develop and propagate its species. In other words, I believe that when we free men, when we free labor, we will free art, we will free the Church, and elevate the theatre, and not until then."

This conviction, this recognition of the spiritual in the material, this connection of the facts of life with the unknown forces in the world, were not confined to theoretical discussions. Mr. Herne's political convictions were likewise founded upon convictions within himself. During the Henry George campaign, when he took the stump in the cause of single tax, we find him connecting art with the civic life of the people, we find him realizing, as only a man can who believes that art is an expression of life, that the producers and the nonproducers of the world may be regarded from the standpoint of dealing in spirit as well as of dealing in wheat and hemp and tobacco. Art, whether it be the shaping of a statue, the writing of a sonnet, or the growing of a prize ear of corn, has a common point of contact. And so again we hear him saying: "The pen, the easel, the chisel, the harp, the sock and buskin, are in reality tools of labor; and the men who wield them are laborers, and their interests are swayed by the welfare and prosperity of those who till the soil, shear the sheep, and weave the cloth."

There are two characteristic notes throughout Mr. Herne's plays, which stand as a fair indication of the measure of the man. We find his love of the beautiful in the sense that truth alone is beautiful. That he approved of Enneking's belief that "the ideal is the choicest expression of the real", is sufficient measure of his high moral outlook upon life. We note his realization of the human qualities which underlie all nature; and it may be further added that he had that pride of race, that instinct of the parental which were so well exhibited in "Margaret Fleming", and in such comments as these: "Maternity I consider the noblest theme of human kind; and I have no patience with that false prudery which would keep from young people truths they ought to know about in their purest and holiest sense." Old-fashioned this may seem, but in its day it represented an advanced position.

Mr. Herne is little known, outside of a limited number of people in this country. Now that he is dead, it is hard to secure actors who can fill rôles that he usually assumed with such fulness of interpretation. William Archer from time to time called the English public's attention to the plays of America's most distinctive dramatist. But unfortunately, the English public only saw the rural pieces, amended to accord with English understanding. Even we in America have not been fully awakened to what Mr. Herne means in the general dramatic and literary development. He was a writer of direct and simple prose; his images were not involved, his characters were not obscured by symbolism. In his narrative, in his descriptions, when he was at his best, one is reminded of the vigorous prose of Lincoln; a direct speech based not on any effort for effect, but prompted by desire to say something, or to tell something in the clearest manner possible. In closing, let me quote one paragraph from a speech of Mr. Herne's, which stands out above all others because it represents the simplicity, the depth, and the whole-souled sincerity of the man. Moreover, it stands as a beautiful bit of prose. The quotation relates to his turning from the writing of "Margaret Fleming" to a consideration of "The Hawthornes" — which later became "Shore Acres":

"Mrs. Herne had gone with two of our daughters to spend a few weeks of the summer at Lemoyne, on Frenchman's Bay, in Maine, and insisted that I should come there and work on the play, and get the benefit of true color and Maine atmosphere; and I went. What an exalted idea of God one gets, down in that old Pine State. One must recognize the sublimity which constantly manifests itself there. It is worth something to live for two whole months on Frenchman's Bay, that beautiful inconstant bay, one minute white with rage, the next all smiles and gently lapping the foothills of old Mount Desert; with the purple mist on the Blue Hills in the distance on the one hand, the Schoodic range on the other; the perfume of the pine trees in every breath you inhale, the roar of the ocean eight miles away, and the bluest of blue skies overarching all. In such a spot as that a man must realize, if he has never realized it before, that he and this planet are one, and part of the universal whole."

CHAPTER TWELVE

David Belasco and the Psychology of the Switchboard

I

The story is told of an artist who, in the cramped quarters of his room, was wont to paint the most exquisite pictures, marked by finesse and delicacy; but no sooner had he accumulated enough to afford a larger studio than the deftness of his art deserted him. It is one of the unexplainable points about all professions that there is a limit to expression; that there is a line where effect has its greatest scope, beyond which the appeal goes to waste. The story points a dramatic moral. For Dion Boucicault, in the course of his vast experience as playwright, actor, and manager, discovered that beyond a certain number, it was difficult for him to fuse the minds of an audience; to grip their attention and to hold it.

Such was the snag against which the stockholders of the New Theatre, in New York, first struck. They wished to build an art playhouse of certain proportions, with a stage far exceeding in amplitude the proscenium width of any ordinary theatre, and suitable for light opera, spectacular and drawing-room drama. This was well-nigh impossible; for, to illustrate the point in exaggeration, it would be artistic suicide to spread the boxed-in delicacy of Pinero's "Trelawny of the 'Wells'" over an area of the Hippodrome stage.

And so, the art of the drama is the art of all arts where proportion, perspective, and color accumulate for a given

effect. No one has studied this fact to greater purpose than David Belasco, in whom the instinct of the painter before his canvas is the dominant characteristic, — an instinct which must assuredly prompt the mechanism of any art theatre we may ever hope to have. When the story of scenic realism is told, he will occupy a distinctive position. Such a survey will narrate how Mrs. John Drew, once playing in "London Assurance", created a sensation by having a real carpet and mirror among the properties for one act. Not only in this, but in all of Boucicault's productions, some marvel of stage mechanism indicated to what extent the scenic art could be carried; and David Belasco has continued the tradition.

In our effort to estimate a man, even though what he next does may upset our theories, there are two phases to be considered, one of which includes the other. Our view depends primarily on what he has done; it is tempered by the direct influence which has been brought to bear upon him by others. No matter what claims to originality an artist may have, no matter how strong the impress of his personality, those subtle workings of environment and of unconscious imitation are perforce obliged to develop within the man a certain inclination, a certain leaning, which will shape his angle of vision. To say that Mr. Belasco was for a time private secretary to Boucicault; to understand that he acknowledges the influence upon him of such pieces as "The Robbers", "Pizarro", and "Fazio"; to follow the status of the theatre when he first reached New York in 1882 — a status measured by the success of such French melodramas as "The Two Orphans", "The Celebrated Case", and "Rose Michel" — these factors will, if examined *in extenso*, explain something about Mr. Belasco's impetus as a playwright.

The man behind his ascetic dress is a combination of conflicting elements. It is easy to say this of any one; but, in the case of Mr. Belasco, facts and conditions make it evident. His manner betrays the artistic temperament; his steady look has two qualities, one which explains how he reaches the estimate of an actor's limitations, and the other in what manner he withstood the enmity of the Theatrical Trust.

It is not always essential for a dramatist to penetrate deeply into life, but one cannot deny that Mr. Belasco's glance has taken in the details thoroughly. He has had the experience which should come to all writers of plays; he has been thrown against the strong contrasts of living which are usually to be found in a mining camp; he has lurked in the highways and byways of existence, unconsciously gathering those elemental stuffs which are the essential ingredients in all passion. These he has in most cases toned down, but the brutal elements in "Du Barry" and in "Adrea" indicate to what uses experience of this kind is brought.

There is the ascetic streak in David Belasco, colored by a pronounced spiritual and contrasting sentimental *verve;* there is the tinge of morbidity which is always attendant upon a clinical analysis of psychological phenomena. None but Mr. Belasco himself can realize the satisfaction he gained many years ago through watching the heart of a woman as it lay upon a plate before him. Yet such was the actual occurrence, all the while his imagination playing havoc with the physical object. In like manner has the manager studied the effects of poisons upon the body, reasoning out the physical contortions as they differed under varying conditions. This preparation for the drama is not essential to all playwrights; it suited Mr. Belasco's temperament that he seek impressions in this manner.

Yet, side by side with this curiosity that digs into the physical causes and effects, there is the other phase characteristic of the ascetic nature — the love of solitude. For five years, during the formative period of his life, Mr. Belasco was under the guidance of the priesthood at Vancouver. The eight-year-old boy was impressionable, and Father McGuire, if he could not educate his tastes away from the stage, at least set a mark of ecclesiasticism upon his dress, to which he has always adhered. In contrast with the little fellow, asleep in his cheerless cell of the monastery, may be set the picture of the nervous playwright as he is to-day, closeted in his studio with his books and curios, totally alone in a roaring city.

Here it is that he plans in secret, the slightest suggestions meaning much to him; he is a lover of the twilight; in the thunder and the lightning are hidden possible electrical impressions. His is the quick grasp of the picturesque, the striking, the impressionable. In every respect does he practise the technique of the painter before his canvas.

II

Mr. Belasco is the second present-day dramatist of note to draw upon Iberian traits, for his family, like the Pineros, were of ancient Portuguese extraction, and were forced to flee to England before the wrath of the Moors. But, while the Pineros remained as British subjects, the Belascos of David's immediate stock proceeded still further to Victoria (in Vancouver), where the father of the present playwright became rich and was elected mayor, then became poor again and made another move to San Francisco, drawn there by optimistic accounts which were called forth by the gold fever of 1849.[1]

In that city it was that the present holder of the Belasco name was born, on July 25, 1853. There is little to record of these early days. It must have been before his departure to Vancouver with Father McGuire that he assumed juvenile rôles in "Pizarro" with Charles Kean; in "Metamora" with Edwin Forrest; in "East Lynne" with Julia Dean. Before then, also, he received some slight school training, as well as gained some reputation as a reciter of "The Madman", "The Vagabonds", and Mrs. Hemans' "Bernado del Carpio."

When he returned from his priest friends, he was thirteen, and not yet quite through his education, for he was placed at Lincoln College, from which he was graduated in 1875. When he was scarcely fourteen, he could boast authorship of "Jim Black; or, The Regulator's Revenge." All through these years, forces in him and around him were pointing toward the stage. It does not take much to fan a liking into

[1] In crossing the Isthmus of Panama, his mother gained distinction as the first woman traveler to do so.

a passion, and it is recorded how, having once gone to see "Hamlet", the boy had rushed home to the garret and there played through the drama, even essaying, at this early age, to rewrite the dialogue from memory!

Then followed the months of a struggling actor. He began by supporting Mary Welles in "The Lion of Nubia", and soon, throwing his whole future into the dramatic scales, Mr. Belasco experienced the vicissitudes of the exhibitor of Egyptian mysteries, of the melodramatic "super", even for a while playing *Hamlet* and *Richard III* himself in the mountain towns and backwoods settlements of the West. He was fortunate, during this period, in being brought into direct contact with the golden era of American acting. Edwin Booth, John McCullough, E. A. Sothern, William Florence, Edwin Adams, and Adelaide Neilson were the stars in the San Francisco of those days. He even joined Sothern's "Dundreary" company, appearing as the valet. "Why did these players begin in the West?" asks Belasco, in his colorful "Life's Story." "Why did they feel that they had to come to San Francisco to build reputations which were presently to culminate in the East? I think the reason is not far to seek. It was because the West was throbbing with the pioneer spirit; its very atmosphere encouraged individuality; everything was done on a big — one might almost say a colossal — scale, and the purse of San Francisco was heavy-weighted with gold."

Thereafter began the training of David Belasco as assistant stage manager of a theatre in Virginia City, where the stock company was prepared for any emergency, from farce to tragedy, and where Belasco was supposed, much as Ibsen had been expected at Bergen, to fit dramas for production.

"There were more reckless women and desperadoes to the square foot in Virginia City," writes Belasco, "than anywhere else in the world, I believe. Every other place was a gambling-hell or an ill-famed resort, while its streets were crowded with the fakirs of the universe."

He was required to act as well as to manage. While serving in this capacity, Dion Boucicault and his company arrived to fill an engagement. The Irish wizard, in the writ-

DAVID BELASCO

"There is no man in the theatre with a better perspective of the history of American Drama."

ing of plays, could juggle with three plots at a time; he had, with Laura Keene, produced a play within an abnormally short period by rehearsing one act while in the midst of writing another. He was alert to activity of all kinds, and he found energy to his liking in the assistant stage manager.

"Boucicault was more than an adapter," Belasco declares, "he was a brilliant and indefatigable slave, resting neither night nor day. There is no doubt that even though he adapted — in accordance with the custom of the time — he added to the original source, making everything he touched distinctly his own. He left everything better than he found it." Belasco recalls Boucicault's rehearsals of "Led Astray", and his work with Charles Thorne, the actor, brought up in the overemotional style of acting. The play needed quiet scenes at moments — repressed emotion. "Now, Charlie, old man, play it down, play it down," would be the constant admonition of Boucicault. "And Charlie did play it down," writes Belasco. "The consequence was, when Boucicault got through with him, he read the line, 'God, oh, my God!' so perfectly that his method soon became the talk of the town. I am sure this repressed style was one of the reasons why 'Led Astray' succeeded. Thus did a school of acting begin in Virginia City, while Boucicault and I were working together."

When he left Virginia City, Boucicault carried Belasco with him as private secretary, and, to his young associate, "Led Astray" was dictated, besides the scenes for many other productions. It is not likely that the effectiveness which marked the Boucicault drama would escape the future wizard of American stagecraft. "Arrah-na-Pogue", when it reached San Francisco, became the one strong outside influence to affect theatrical conditions on the Pacific slope. The secretary might have gone to New York soon after, had his mother not intervened; and it was just as well, since the experience which he was now to gain, as manager and stock dramatist of Baldwin's Theatre, matured his managerial powers, and at the same time brought him into association with James A. Herne, who, for a while, was at the same theatre. The playgoer of the present generation needs must

weigh the value of such repertoires as old-time actors used to carry — dramas that called for the varying shades of classic comedies, and the historical scope of different styled tragedies. But, though there was a conventional way of regulating all stock companies, Belasco, even at that early date, began to introduce original methods, and Charles Thorne, Frank Mayo, and Edwin Adams — all men of longer experience — soon came to regard his advice as authoritative.

Belasco was the youngest manager along the Pacific slope. The theatre was run on a somewhat crude, though very artistic, scale. Audiences of all classes had to be catered to, and a motley, picturesque crowd gathered together on Saturdays — the melodrama evenings — to thrill over "The Idiot of the Mountains" and "The Robber of the Pyrenees." Thus the years passed at Baldwin's Theatre, the Grand Opera House, and the Metropolitan.

III

When finally Belasco decided, in 1882, to go to New York, his confidence in himself was backed by an enviable experience. No schooling is better for a playwright than just this intimate contact which Mr. Belasco had had with the hundreds of plays that came under his supervision. Already his hand had been turned to dramatizations, adaptations, and even original work.

But when the Mallorys engaged him as stage director and stock dramatist of the Madison Square Theatre, they probably placed more store by his general usefulness as a producer, as a manipulator of other people's crude material, than as an author of any formidable proportions.

New York was then going through its final decade of old-time managerial policies; the Theatrical Trust was still to come; the American playwright, in the face of foreign importations, was finding it difficult to gain recognition; Mr. Howard was battling hard and receiving rough handling by the critics for his "Saratoga." A. M. Palmer was meeting success with French melodramas; Wallack, atune to English

melodrama, was soon listening to Belasco's tempting offer of "La Belle Russe"; Daly, at the most disastrous period of his career, was tottering through an opera craze. The latter manager had begun with marked success; such pieces as "Under the Gas Light", "Article 47" (for Clara Morris) and "Pique" (for Fanny Davenport) had obtained instant favor. He had been drawing from France, when he adapted "Frou-Frou" for Agnes Ethel, and he had turned to the German of Mosenthal for "Leah, the Forsaken." It was after this that he found a mine in the German farce.

In the midst of all this conglomerate emotional material, Mr. Belasco found the Madison Square Theatre devoted to the quiet domestic play, so quiet that it had drawn down upon itself the derisive title of "milk and water" drama. The smallness of the house encouraged an intimate drama; quick changes of scene, due to an ingenious double stage invented by Steele MacKaye, made it possible for a continuous plot to approach much nearer to reality. Stage declamation began to disappear, even though Belasco and his associates were laughed to scorn. They were the extremists of their time, but their extreme methods began to prevail. In the old drama, there had been fixed scenes written and directed for applause, and "the action," declares Belasco, "stopped until the applause came." All this was discarded at the Madison Square Theatre. Naturally the distorted methods of acting would not suit this style of management. Those were the days of over-emphasis, big periods, measured intervals, and rounded gesture. Mr. Belasco proceeded to sacrifice all of this bombast, much to the surprise and doubt of his co-workers. The comedian no longer was allowed to wait for a laugh; it had either to come through the pure unctuousness of the character acting, or not at all. Such a *régime* as the young manager instituted gained the confidence of everyone.

The little playhouse on Twenty-fourth Street was in the heyday of its existence; A. M. Palmer soon became interested in its success; the stock company which bore its name was winning public favor; a school of acting was to involve the labors of Henry C. De Mille and Boucicault, who turned to

it, broken in health and sorely disturbed in mind. Mr. De Mille was play reader for the theatre, which meant, for example, that in three months he examined two hundred manuscripts submitted by would-be American playwrights!

When, however, a drama was accepted, it was soon turned over to Mr. Belasco for final shaping. This is what happened to Mr. Howard's "The Young Mrs. Winthrop"; suggested changes were made on all sides, and the final recasting was accomplished with Belasco's assistance. The result was that by the production Mr. Howard gained warm commendation from the press, and Mr. Belasco immediately found himself in possession of considerable prestige.

What followed, up to the time the latter joined forces with Daniel Frohman at the Lyceum, in 1885,[1] constitutes the history of the New York theatre rather than the development of the American dramatist. It is only necessary to say that, under such conditions, and together with Mr. Belasco's temperament, there grew into dominant proportions a managerial grasp, an analytical keenness for large effect, a marvelous readiness to assimilate according to his needs, an instinctive and unerring eye for the romantic.

So far, little of his actual stage writing had brought him any unusual distinction. Between his arrival in the East and his collaborating with De Mille, "La Belle Russe" (Wallack's, 1882), "The Stranglers of Paris" (1883), "Hearts of Oak" [with Mr. Herne] (1884), and "May Blossom" (1884) had met with success. But there were also to his credit titles which are not even familiar in name to the present generation of theatregoers. In this category are included "Valerie", "Miss Helyett", "Pawn Ticket 210", "The Moonlight Marriage", "The Doll Master", "A Christmas Night", "Within an Inch of His Life", "The Lone Pine", "American Born", "Not Guilty", "The Haunted House", "Cherry and Fair Star", "Sylvia's Loves", "Paul Arniff", "The Curse of Cain", "The Millionaire's Daughter", "The Ace of Spades", and "The Roll of the Drum."

One is not far wrong in inferring that, however effective

[1] See "Memories of a Manager." Daniel Frohman. 1911.

these may have been, there was more melodramatic situation in them than definite intent, nor did they have sufficient distinctiveness in themselves to survive the immediate atmosphere and demand which encouraged them. Had it not been that Mr. Belasco's art instinct as a constructive manager was uppermost at the time, he might have been contributing at this moment to the broad melodrama which thrives on the morbid, however it may seek to glorify virtue. But, so characteristic did this art side become, that one cannot separate the manager from the author.

By the deftness of his stage manipulation, which had made him so sought after that the Mallorys on occasions were forced to lend him to others, public attention was now centered upon the Lyceum. The association of Mr. De Mille with Mr. Belasco resulted in four plays, all marked with certain conventions that characterized Mr. Howard at his best — stock situations that balance three sets of opposite characters: the ingénue rôle, the romantic hero and heroine, and the middle-aged couple around whom comedy scenes, bordering nigh on to farce, were woven. We see this in "The Charity Ball" (1889), as well as in "Men and Women" (1890). Then there was "The Wife", a drama which, in 1887, was brought into the courts, where an unsuccessful suit was tried, with Frances Aymar Mathews as the plaintiff. But the greatest coup which the two made together was the preparation of a rôle in "Lord Chumley" (1888), for E. H. Sothern, which marked the son with some of the excellent comedy capabilities belonging to his father, whose "Lord Dundreary" was undoubtedly the source of inspiration. It must be said that the collaborators succeeded in developing a certain human sympathy for the fop, which was not unlike the loveableness so pronounced in the earlier rôle.[1]

Their writing was strictly in accord with the demands made upon them by a stock company. Their plays were "vehicles" to fit certain players. Belasco, in his "Life's Story", is

[1] In 1889, Mr. Belasco and Mr. Franklin Sargent produced the "Electra" of Sophocles; while on the Pacific Coast Mr. Belasco mounted a version of the Passion Play.

frank about the mechanical way in which De Mille and he constructed their Lyceum plays, — to suit Georgia Cayvan, to fit the rising personality of E. H. Sothern. In their plays the Lyceum Stock Company found its being. "The Wife" was produced November 1, 1887. It reached its 239th performance, June 16, 1888. The Lyceum stability was founded upon it.

Of "Chumley", Belasco writes naïvely: "We decided on the spot to make our hero a young English lord. At this period of the American Drama, the young English lord was invariably an ass. . . . We decided that certain *Dundreary* traits would be excellent in such a character. Then came a question of a name, and we decided to select a simple-sounding name spelled in elaborate English fashion. 'Cholmondeley' was the name settled upon, which we abbreviated to Chumley. . . . Putting the plot together was an easy matter; we had only to get a series of eccentric situations, with love scenes and bright lines. Our real task was to exploit a comedian."

Indeed, the De Mille-Belasco combination was a clever exploitation of their talents for the sake of a stock company. "The Charity Ball" was cut after the demands of the day. Dramatists were forced to have a very strong third act; they had to introduce comic relief with "young lovers." "Nowadays," writes Belasco, "these ideas are obsolete, and have gone the way of the 'aside' and the 'soliloquy.'"

And what was the result of all Belasco's ingenuity? Here is what he says:

> Our productions at the Lyceum were marked by great simplicity of treatment. There was no attempt to be theatrical. We used to depict life as the men and women who came to see us experienced it. There was no cut and dried staginess. . . . We on Fourth Avenue gave an allegiance to the so-called 'society' drama. In this line we surpassed all other theaters in the city.

IV

Between 1890 and 1895, which last date marks the inception of the Theatrical Syndicate, perhaps one might say until after "Zaza" (1899) and "Naughty Anthony" (1900), which ended his association with any members of the organized managerial system, Mr. Belasco must be regarded only as a successful stage manager and a skilful playwright and adapter. "The Girl I Left Behind Me" (1893),[1] written in conjunction with Franklyn Fyles, was one of the initial successes of the Empire Theatre; "The Heart of Maryland" (1895) was one of the first of his dramas to employ a sensational piece of stage technique, such as the swinging bell, with the heroine holding to the clapper; "Zaza" (1899) indicated the deftness with which his translation quite eclipsed the real author of the French original, and his training of Mrs. Carter in the title rôle exemplified the wonderful illuminative power with which he can, in his instruction, carry an actress to the heart of a character and bring out, as a photographer does on a negative, those fine lines which are never evident in the first moments.

From this time on, however, his progress was marked by two dominant notes: he fought against odds, and by his attitude, brought public attention to bear upon both sides of the Trust problem; he likewise incited public curiosity through the lavishness of his stagecraft, so thoroughly taking hold of popular appeal as well-nigh to hypnotize by what is peculiarly, yet legitimately, termed "the Belasco atmosphere."

There are always two sides to a given question, and it is never wise to discuss one without laying as much emphasis upon the other. Suffice it to say, whatever move Mr. Belasco made against the Trust was planned quite as much in the cause of independent art as to further his personal interest. He never once gainsaid the advantage of systematizing theatrical finance so as to bring the money question down to a thorough banking basis; but he questioned the ethical side

[1] Other plays during this time were "The Senator's Wife" (1892), and "The Younger Son" (1893).

DAVID BELASCO (1853–)

For full bibliographies, see Moses' "Representative American Dramas: National and Local" and Moses' "Representative Plays", Vol. III.

The Wife.	With Henry DeMille.	Lyceum Theatre, New York, November 1, 1887.
Lord Chumley.	With Henry DeMille.	Lyceum Theatre, New York, August 21, 1888.
The Charity Ball.	With Henry DeMille.	Lyceum Theatre, New York, November 19, 1889.
Men and Women.	With Henry DeMille.	Proctor's 23d Street Theatre, New York, October 21, 1890.
The Heart of Maryland.		Herald Square Theatre, New York, October 22, 1895.
Madame Butterfly.	With John Luther Long.	Herald Square Theatre, New York, March 5, 1900.
The Auctioneer.	With Charles Klein.	New Haven, Conn., September 9, 1901.
The Music Master.	With Charles Klein.	New York, September 26, 1904.
Du Barry.		Criterion Theatre, New York, December 25, 1901.
The Darling of the Gods.		Belasco Theatre, now The Republic, New York, December 3, 1902.
The Girl of the Golden West.		Belasco Theatre, New York, November 14, 1905.
The Rose of the Rancho.	With Richard Walton Tully.	Belasco Theatre (Republic), New York, November 27, 1906.

DAVID BELASCO (1853–) *Continued*		
The Return of Peter Grimm.	Belasco Theatre (formerly The Stuyvesant), New York, January 2, 1911.	
The Theatre Through Its Stage Door.	By David Belasco. Edited by Louis DeFoe.	New York: Harper Brothers. 1919.
The Life of David Belasco.	By William Winter.	New York: Moffat, Yard & Co. 1918. 2 vols.
David Belasco.	By James Huneker.	*Theatre Arts Magazine*, October, 1921.
Plays Produced Under the Management of David Belasco.	Edited.	Privately Printed. New York, 1925.
The David Belasco Arrangement of Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice."	Edited by David Belasco.	Privately Printed. New York, 1922.

of the booking problem. This placed in control of a few hands the portioning of time engagements along theatrical circuits, and involved the playhouses stretched, chainlike, across the continent.

It is a matter of stage history how certain actors made bold to stand against the dictatorship of the Trust, and how, one by one, they succumbed.[1] Not so Mr. Belasco, and because in his theatre he was determined to practice his own policy, and not be dictated to, he soon realized that along that chain of theatres he was irretrievably debarred; which

[1] For a few articles on the Syndicate, see: *International*, 1: 99–122, Jan., 1900, Norman Hapgood; *Fortn. Rev.*, 79: 1010–1016, June, 1903, Charles Hawtrey; *Leslie's Monthly*, Oct., 1904, 581–592; Nov., 1904, 31–42; Dec., 1904, 202–210; Jan., 1905, 331–334; *Cosmopolitan*, 38: 193–201, Dec., 1904.

meant that he must either play in halls or be kept out of certain towns. This necessitated his planning for his own theatres, in New York, in Washington, in Philadelphia, and in Boston. One by one the difficulties constituting his exile were overcome. But to add to the condition of theatrical monopoly, Mr. Belasco had, likewise, to face a personal antagonism, which is hardly a matter for theatre discussion, however much it may have been enlarged because of Mr. Belasco's theatre success.

Since the opening of his Belasco playhouse, in New York, the manager has presented a long list of remarkable successes, from the standpoint of scenic artistry and drawing qualities. He has engaged the efforts of John Luther Long, of Charles Klein, of Richard Walton Tully, of the Misses Phelps and Short, and others as collaborators; and under his undoubted genius as a painstaking instructor there have come to the fore such names as Mrs. Carter, Miss Bates, Mr. Warfield, Mr. Frank Keenan, Miss Starr, Miss Walker, Miss O'Neil, and Miss Ulrich. Furthermore, as material for his success, he has depended upon "Madame Butterfly" (1900 — Long), "Du Barry" (1900), "The Darling of the Gods" (1902 — Long), "Sweet Kitty Bellairs" (1903 — dramatization), "Adrea" (1905 — Long), "The Girl of the Golden West" (1905),[1] "The Rose of the Rancho" (1906 — Tully), "The Grand Army Man" (1907 — Phelps — Short). To this list may be added his assistance as manager in the success of "The Auctioneer" and "The Music Master", by Charles Klein, and of "The Warrens of Virginia", by William C. De Mille, the son of his old collaborator.[2]

What are the elements that have marked Mr. Belasco, or, it would be more in order to ask, on what special elements has Mr. Belasco placed the stamp of his own temperament and

[1] Made into an opera by Puccini, and sung at the Metropolitan Opera House during the season of 1910–1911.

[2] Among Mr. Belasco's other successes may be mentioned "The Lily" (1910), by himself, and "The Concert", adapted from the German by Leo Ditrichstein. Walter's "The Easiest Way" (1909) created great discussion in New York, but was debarred, by act of the mayor, from Boston. During the Spring of 1911, he presented William De Mille's "The Woman."

genius? I have been fortunate in having before me the stage copies of his important dramas, and I cannot but marvel at the strokes which are made by his unerring eye, unerring in the sense that they seem always to fulfil the special requirement which he at the moment needs. The intricate movement in the first act of "Zaza", the filmy threads of broken dialogue, the minute directions of the dressing-room scene, where, not for a moment, even in the reading, is the imagination left in doubt as to the details of business — here is the painter, in his most impressionistic manner, flinging splashes of humanity against a canvas, splashes which draw together the moment they are brought in continuous and active relation one with the other.

"The Darling of the Gods", overweighty as it was in its mounting, would be difficult to follow in the manuscript, were Mr. Belasco's infinite care of small matters not conscientiously set down. Even so, the demand this play makes on the imagination, in addition to the amount of imagination it shows in itself, are indication of the visual insight which he and his collaborator have brought to bear.

I do not contend that light plots, and property plots, and calcium plots entitle a man to the distinction of playwright; but the power to conjure up the effective contrasts of high light and shadow is as much to Mr. Belasco's credit as it is to the artist who paints upon a large canvas. The stage settings, sometimes overrich in detail, are nevertheless almost always unfailing in their atmospheric effects. The courtesan, *Du Barry*, was given a setting which balanced the savage abandon of her nature with the licentious terrorism of the period. "Adrea", barbaric throughout, did not fail to create a disgust which was too strong to be counteracted by the moment of sacrifice in the end. These were not characteristics which were new to Mr. Belasco; they were evident in him long before, even though they were not fully developed. Some may think that Sardou was the influence behind this, but the young dramatist had written "La Belle Russe" before Fanny Davenport began with "Fedora" in a list which ended with "Gismonda." It was simply the innate genius of the stage

manager who may not write for literature, but who, while he remains active, is a constant source of pleasure.

There is nothing so disillusionizing as an empty theatre in daylight; the gaping orchestra chairs show the absence of a responsive crowd; the space from pit to dome, from centre stage to family circle, is like an empty shell waiting for sound and light. But, if you possess even the slightest *sense* of the theatre, the scenery with its daub of paint, the switchboard with its banks of levers, the stage hands in their shirt-sleeves, will represent the elements of a great art, whose spirit gilds the mechanics of the play.

Take for granted that the scene is naught but a house of cards, that the back-drop on close view is no more nor less than a splash of color, — behind it all is the instinct that creates perspective and atmosphere from the flat. The mechanics of the stage have been brought to such perfection that their misuse instantly reveals the lack of the artist.

The stage is an organism, a whole of many parts; the idea set in dialogue and action must be clothed in speech, light, and scene. This is the supreme work of the stage manager, — to draw these things together in their truest relationship.

One has a right to speak of the psychology of the switchboard, to humanize the mechanics of the theatre. The electrician holds Nature in his hands; he has thought out the elements of a prairie sun, and he measures its intensity by the number of switches in use. At rehearsals he has diffused the scene with many moonlights, until the Italian glamor appealed to his feeling. The stage has changed since the time Mary Anderson's *Juliet* faced the headlight of a locomotive, held aloft as the inconstant moon by a Negro boy. Psychology is essentially a fluid state, and the progress of electricity has made it possible for stage lighting to be fluid, to be subject to imperceptible shades, to *absorb* the individual rays in a general suffusion.

Not one of our present-day managers has so profited by the response of the electric switchboard to human psychology as Mr. Belasco; even the most ardent disciples of the "new

art" have not shown any more feeling in their mixture of light and color. In his hands it is the very essence of atmosphere, the very indicator of the scene's tone. Whether it be the enervating blaze of sunlight in the opening act of "The Rose of the Rancho", or the cold gray dawn after the night's anguish in "Madame Butterfly", the result represents no mechanical accident. Once, not so long ago, effect used to be entirely artificial; the villain's entrance was heralded by dark, restless music from a few violins, and by the roll of a kettledrum. A green spot-light rested on his face. To-day, Mr. Belasco has driven incidental sentimentality from his orchestra by his dependence upon the switchboard.

V

What do we mean by the psychology of stage lighting? Simply that every emotional effect of large import results in a corresponding direction being given to the electrician. To take an external example, suppose the stage in semi-darkness; a character enters with a lighted candle. One naturally expects an increase in light, but the intensity must move across the stage with the movement of the candle. It is here that the electrician, from his platform, plays upon his switchboard. By a system of interlocking, and of dimming the flow of current, he can send across the "foots" or their substitute — the suffused light without "foots" — a flare of lights to follow the candle flame; one bulb is made to glow as the other fades.

Such is the ease of gaining an elementary effect, but the principle is the same, however complicated the requirement. In his studio, Mr. Belasco first imagines his canvas; he then places his "light plots" in the hands of his electrician for fulfilment. At rehearsal he adds to, modifies, rejects, fusing the whole as a painter does with his brush. His stage directions at first become mere skeleton notes of transitory feeling. His assistant stands near, pencil in hand, watching the restless move of the manager, searching among the lights for what he wants. The switchboard is taxed to its uttermost, mixing

color to accord with a certain quality of shadow in Mr. Belasco's mind.

If a drama is big, if an actor's art is expressive, a story may often be ably suggested by pantomime; its emotional color, range, and variation in the same way may be sketched in light. Having rehearsed his company beyond the "letter perfect" point, Mr. Belasco assembles them for light effects. His experiments are as much *with* you as *on* you. Not only must the actors harmonize among themselves, but also with the lights. To their own emotional interpretation of a rôle, they must add the atmospheric effect of the stage light. For six minutes the curtain was up before a word was spoken in "The Rose of the Rancho." It was a somnolent scene; those who saw it felt the drowsy vapor of the glow, the still air, and the enervating heat. Let us discount the statement of the press-agent that "so realistic was the scene, it made the stage carpenters drowsy", and be satisfied with the plausible fact that the imagination of the actor caused the switchboard to react upon himself.

Undoubtedly, a stage manager should make his people *feel* the lights; if the scene is cold, the actor should find it easy to shiver within the bleak, steely rays devoid of all warm color. In this way imitation approaches reality; the actor responds by absorbing every element, condition, or circumstance, in order to make his body warm or cold, as the case may be.

Every electrician is in possession of his *cue*, knows the story of the play, and is made to calculate the emotional requirements in terms of his switchboard. He is no machine, no mere feeder of the stage with light. The human tempo of the situation pulses in his veins; he lowers or raises his levers until every blemish is removed. There must be no blotch, no streaks, for the lights should glide; sharp edges should be made to blend.

In that rehearsal for lights, the manager must consider the balance of white surface and shadow. A glint is thrown on a ribbon, a bit of lace, a bare arm or neck; this must be balanced by the absence of light somewhere else. The

switchboard must have a tempo regulated to accord with the beat of emotion. Not only that, but the light is guided by the color of a costume, toned to contrast with other dresses possibly; even the hair limits the intensity of light, and if the features of an actor are strong, a strong current upon the face would only serve to reveal a "war map" of lines. A white light brings disillusionment in its path.

Rehearsal is a matter of constant shifting; a thousand and one directions are given which never find their way on the prompter's script of the play. "I think I'll make that so and so," says the Stage Manager, and the Carpenter looks askance at the Electrician, while the Scene Painter goes back to his pots and brushes, to try again some perspective cliff or shore. "I not only want a moon, but a Japanese moon," cried Mr. Belasco, during a rehearsal of "The Darling of the Gods."

In the matter of the switchboard, Mr. Belasco stands in a new light. He is not the conventional stage manager; he is a lover of Nature, having felt the close of day on the plains, and seen the first streak of dawn in Italy. He has been an investigator of all phases of the physical as well as of the emotional. He is not merely satisfied with reaching the eye, but he must strike the heart; his lights are always accessories; they are made to reinforce or to counteract; they must serve purpose, otherwise be discarded. At times he places too much dependence upon such effect; we feel it in the way he "plays up" a brunette or blonde, working his lights to show her to the best advantage. But in the majority of cases, his results are artistic rather than theatrical.

From one of the iron bridges in the flies, flung far above the proscenium arch on the side, the stage presents to view every point of vantage. The five sets of border lights, consisting of two hundred and seventy lamps as an average, the three banks of bulbs in the "foots",[1] the light strips ready to be placed in any wing, the baby lenses to counteract any false reflection of the "foots" when shadow is thrown on the face at inopportune moments, the large lenses on the bridges, the lamps centred on particular stage accessories, the stereopticon for cloud

[1] Mr. Belasco was among the first in America to do away with the "foots."

effects during a storm or sun or moonlight, — with these the electrician, at the final rehearsal, has "fixed" his diagram, which he has by him for the first few regular performances.

Amber, blue, red, and white are the general colors in use on the stage, besides the direct flow of limelight. But not always will the standard color do; then the electrician mixes his own stain and dips the incandescent bulbs therein. The hard problem for him to consider is not how to reach the proper light out of darkness; it were easy thus to obtain a realistic sun. But the difficult matter is to have the sun come after the appearance of a gray dawn; in other words, to obtain light effects out of light.

The psychology of the switchboard is largely the problem of counteracting shadows, of bringing emotion into high light. That is why the old idea that tragedy must be given the tragic tone is an exploded theory, since contrast, rather than agreement, is the electrician's asset. Death lurks in the sunlight as well as in the shadow. Was it not in Forbes-Robertson's "Hamlet" that *Ophelia* came, broken-minded, into an orchard pink with the touch of Spring?

There is not an inch of surface on the stage that cannot be subjected to a flood of light, which may be softened or intensified slowly by means of simplicity dimmers, — devices even more responsive than the cock of a gas-jet. So important a matter is the switchboard, that a portable one, in no way as extensive as the stationary one, is carried on the road as an important part of the play's emotional effect.

In "The Rose of the Rancho", during the course of the first scene, with the sun beating down on the Mission garden, with the *Padre* asleep on his vine-covered porch, the electrician is busy at the switch. Some lenses are focussed for light, others for shadow, amber is thrown upon the gate, straw medium paints the orange tree. A rose bush must have a special ray upon it, while the arbor, and certain roses, must catch the glint of sunlight. One lens strikes the fountain, centered on the stage, coloring the stone seat upon which *Juanita* flirts with *Kearney*. All the while the baby lens is kept busy spotting the chief actors on the stage.

The significant part of psychology as applied to stage lighting is that, in the highest perfection of its handling, it is never fixed, particularly in plays dependent upon special atmosphere. If the sunlight strikes the broad front of the Mission steeple at the top, the same intensity hardly suffices to flood the entire building. As the play progresses, the day progresses, and the lights vary; these changes occur in accordance with the electrician's cues. The siesta hour of the first act approaches the eventide, and *Juanita* falls deeper in love with the "Gringo" *Kearney*, as the shadows grow more and more. Thus the "light plot" reads:

"At cue: 'Meet me at my posada', change lenses Nos. 7, 5, 3, on lower bridge to light amber, also lens on upper bridge R., and lenses on stage R. 3E.; also lens back stage on bridge L., and the four open boxes in 3. Put on 1st border blue to $\frac{3}{4}$ and 2d, 3d, and 4th borders red to full; take down whites to $\frac{1}{3}$."

It may read a little differently now, for Mr. Belasco is not behindhand in giving place to "new." His theatre may not have an horizant, but the "wizard" of the switchboard reaches the same effects in different ways.

This shorthand notation was, and still is, indicative of mechanical response; levers are handled like the shift key of a typewriter, banks of lights are interlocked, so as to respond to one force at the same time. Then comes *Kearney's* caressing words: "Let me hold your little brown hand in mine." Many the lovers who have strayed in a garden of roses during the gathering twilight which creeps upon them! But here on the stage there must be a "change of all lenses on bridges and open boxes to red, except the two on bridge left, which go to salmon; take down foots to $\frac{1}{2}$, and amber borders to $\frac{1}{4}$; also dim the tubular lamps on window and arbor R."

All the time the scene grows darker; the lamp on the rose bush is blinded, the fountain is cast in shadow, the belfry is made misty, while the blues begin to mingle with the reds for evening.

Finally, there is uttered *Juanita's* cry of love as *Kearney* leaves her, determined on saving her property from the land-

grabbers, looting California. Hence, at cue, "Oh, Gringo, why did you come?"— "Slowly pass amber color over baby lens in 1 R. (This lamp is on *Juanita* at the time; the color is just passed over the lamp and taken off again while the line is spoken.) At same cue, take off both lamps in flies, L. 1E. This light stands till end of act."

Here one has suggested only a fractional part of the mechanics behind the stage — the psychology of the switchboard, which is only effective when employed with reticence, with reason, with intelligent understanding, with feeling. There is the cartoon use of light, as seen in the spotter limestreak following the clown in the circus; there is a melodramatic use of light, noted in the splotch of green thrown upon the face of Mansfield while he changed from *Jekyll* to *Hyde*. But the artist at the switchboard is a believer in the minor notes as the best notes, and, as regards Mr. Belasco's management, it might be truly claimed he does not act without reason. He has often said he does not believe in dragging in sound simply for the sake of sound; a wise principle to uphold, even if it is not always followed.

"The Rose of the Rancho" serves our purpose for illustrating the psychology of the switchboard, because its atmosphere involved constantly shifting light; any one of Mr. Belasco's plays largely depends upon accessory of this character, and upon the mechanics demanding continual attention. In the third act of his California romance, we are given a dark stage creeping to full light: reds and blues which succumb to early dawn ambers. The scene is on the roof, *Kearney* waiting for the day. From the main switch the electrician is working his "dimmers" slowly; some clusters of blue — for instance — must take a generous ten minutes to gain full intensity. Here and there on the stage "boards", at places known as pockets, which are merely indicated spots where light plugs may be inserted, a connecting link is to be had between a lamp and the main current. The electrician can only manage the general circuit of "foots" and "borders" and house lights; he has assistants who are drilled by him to work the separate lanterns from the wings and the bridges. Every movement

of the persons on that supposed roof is attended by a corresponding balance of incandescence.

The ordinary dress-suit, drawing-room comedy has a fixed light which does not concern itself greatly with the switchboard. But, whenever the latter is used, when the light values are supposed to move for the sake of theatrical effects, so broad as to hide physiological consistency, then the lack of taste is felt as well as seen. There is certain to be incongruity of color; there are streaks of light, ill-concealed, if concealed at all, by the lanterns which, in the hands of the thinking mechanic, usually absorb and blend when necessary. We once had a production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream", more Edison than Shakespeare, more mechanical device than *Puck*, more accessory than art. On the other hand, Forbes-Robertson's desert scene in Shaw's "chronicle" play, where *Cæsar* first glimpses *Cleopatra* in the arms of the Sphinx, was made spacious merely through the varying of blue shadows on an almost empty stage, with a back drop of endless sky.

We have been on the road to a great revolution in the pyschology of the switchboard. Ever since Garrick brought with him from France the footlight which replaced the ancient chandelier, we have been studying how to rid ourselves of it, and we have done so; we have a right to discard anything, to introduce any device which will suit our purpose, and still retain the object of illusion while enriching the picture.

Many of Mr. Belasco's plays, as plays, are lacking in the qualities which his scenic artistry for the moment supplies. "The Girl of the Golden West" is an excellent example of such. The moving scene down the mountainside to the door of the saloon did succeed marvelously in taking one out of the street and away from the city.

But that Mr. Belasco, with his scenery and with his stage business, is inventive, becomes evident in any of his plays. Take "The Rose of the Rancho", where *Juanita* and *Kearney* are seated by the well; the lover moves nearer and nearer, whereupon she seizes the gourd and throws water on the seat between them — a stroke of business worth a page of dialogue. Take "The Warrens of Virginia" — after the war, the South-

ern General is dozing in his garden; for the space of a second, one hears the sigh of the wind, the spectral roll of drums, the spirit breathing of the bugles — and he wakens — all done with the deft modulation which might have been turned into bathos by the slightest over-accentuation. The manager is thus painting for others.

These were the qualities marking David Belasco, which represented his place in American Drama during the nineties. He was the creative manager who wrote his plays by acting them; who, faced by two stenographers, evolved his characters and situations in actual movement, now thinking of a speech which he pinned up somewhere for his last act, again jotting down some business, some note about this scene or that, but always moving surely toward the completion of the first draft, so as to begin rehearsals. Were some of his plays, like "The Darling of the Gods", published just as they were typewritten for the stage, they would be invaluable texts for the amateur playwright; they would point to the platitudinous but none the less absolute fact that the theatre, taken as a whole, demands that the playwright must be master of more than one set of tools.

VI

Since those days of early experiment with the switchboard, that Belasco carried on so unremittingly, a great change has come upon the American Theatre. The artist with his brush has driven away the cobwebs of a past scenic art, and has illustrated a philosophy of decoration that adds much to the inner value of the play. Belasco has not paused at his switchboard and let the innovators catch him napping. He has done what he deemed best for his stage, and has not given thought to trouble or cost. Of course, in his reception of the art theories of Gordon Craig and Max Reinhardt, he has been careful to emphasize that they have not after all been such innovators. And he has repeatedly called attention to the fact that, in his long experience, he has himself done without "foots" before they were obliterated altogether as harmful creators of unnecessary shadows; that he has used a fore-

stage in accord with the traditions of the Elizabethans; that, though his stage shows no horizant, he has through his switchboard gained the same atmospheric effects.

In other words, the "new" movement to Belasco is largely the exploitation of eccentricity; it is largely an illustration that a man is never a prophet in his own country. He listens to the exponents of "unity of production" and smiles: for, if there is one thing about Belasco and his numerous attractions, it is that unity is stamped all over them. He has been a director, with absolute say, for so long a while, that the producing artist does not seem to be a "new" phenomenon to him. He has been attacked as though the enemy of such advances in stagecraft, and he has remained quiet. But now there seems to be an inclination on his part to claim his own. He sees the theatre moving nearer to Nature: and he resents any one claiming that he has not been true to this Nature he has worshipped from his first entrance into the theatre.

Strange the conflicting elements in the man's artistic makeup. He must give each phase of himself its true value. He will not believe that the theatre's salvation is entirely centred in the producer's hand — the producer who is only one of three in the life of a drama. For, having been an actor, he can see the importance of the actor's position, and being, by instinct, a dramatist, he claims that the play is after all of some importance. His long experience in the theatre, where he has seen movements come and go, has served to make him reticent as to innovation. He regards experiment as healthy, but as subject to further test, and as dependent on acceptance by theatregoers. True to his nature, he scouts impressionism, as he has scouted symbolism for itself alone. He writes:

It is the claim of the radical impressionsts that to reproduce the effects of Nature faithfully in the theatre is to stifle imagination and to distract attention from the beauty of the spoken word of the play. It is argued that a few violent splotches of green upon a drapery can better express to an audience the idea of a forest than the actual reproduction in painting, and in light effects, of that forest. Or that a few

vivid, solid colors spread over an unstable back-cloth can suggest to the mind the brilliant glories of a summer sunset. I confess that I cannot follow the theories of theoretical impressionism to such lengths.

To a man used to copying Nature — going to every extreme to gain his effects — simplicity of suggestion is therefore difficult to compass, to understand. There is something for Belasco's side of the argument when he says that the eccentric is as disconcerting as the naturalism of his endeavor. That he cannot see the value of simplicity is a condition that can only be explained by examining into the matter of his taste: the æsthetics of the Belasco theatre might at times be challenged, however much his effort be subject to praise.

Belasco's conservatism, however, does not leave him quiescent in his feeling for stage effect. He loves the problems of stagecraft, and, though he watches the innovations of others, and often profits by their suggestion — even as they have profited by what he has done in his own workshop — he continues, with the new facilities of the switchboard, to arrive at what he wants. What he wants is not what the younger generation are seeking. And there the gap between them widens. With no real cause, however. For Belasco is working for the good of the theatre as he sees it. He has always had an unceasing enthusiasm for his work; he has always been eager to make discoveries; he is never away from his studio. He has clearly in mind what he wants to do for fifteen years ahead. It is that ceaseless endeavor of his which makes him the most distinctive figure we have to-day in the American Theatre. There may be groups who hold in their hands equally as virile a contribution to be made. They are opening vistas which Belasco cannot see. But he has already opened vistas which they are not generous enough to recognize. His decoration as Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Legion d'Honneur was not a misplaced one. His influence has been a distinctly worthy one. He was in advance of the new movement, and prepared some of the way for it.

VII

I have before me a small booklet, "Plays Produced under the Stage Direction of David Belasco", issued in 1925. It contains nearly fifty pages of human endeavor on the part of David Belasco, as actor, author, producer, collaborator, and adapter. It reveals plainly the various stages through which he has passed to his present position. There is no man in the theatre with a better perspective of the history of American Drama, and what it has had to contend with since the gold fever frenzy of California days. Before him has passed the country's best acting: all the better is he able to fathom the artistic abilities and limitations of our present-day players. He has been a worker in the theatre when stage effects were of the crudest, and he has aided in raising the stage from those crudities. He has worked in the stock period, when, as a stock dramatist, he learned the mere carpentry of stage technique. From arrant melodrama he has passed along successive experiments through which playwriting had to go before it reached its present state of literary renaissance. He has combatted the many reactionary fashions which kept the American Drama from gaining strength, and winning the confidence of the theatregoer. He passed through an era when French plays, not protected by copyright, became any manager's property; and he has seen different versions of the same play produced on rival stages — a grab-bag method of competition, before which the native dramatist had to succumb. He worked under the driving personality of Dion Boucicault, and probably learned from him the easy method by which new plays could be made from old ones.

But a reading of his life, whether it be his own sketchy story or William Winter's verbose record, will illustrate how far-reaching his associations have been, how helpful his personal initiative. His collaboration with Herne, with Gillette, with Howard, with Thomas is not to be ignored; his fight for independence in the face of theatre monopoly forms an excellent page in his record; his discovery and making of players measure his genuine forcefulness as a director. While we

must regard him here as a playwright, his final value will be on the side of the American Theatre. His productions of other men's work have swallowed up his own efforts as a dramatist. But each play given by him has displayed his own creative touch: a touch often which would have been better expended on material of better quality. In his capacity as a producer, he has probably been more conservative, more out of the pale of the "new" movement, than in any other direction. I have already described his love of the switchboard in the early nineteen-hundreds: that switchboard has changed only in its accessories; in its spirit it is the same. Belasco is still interested in the picture-frame drama. Since he finished "The Return of Peter Grimm", he himself has had little time to write. He has adapted well: "The Secret" is a bit of technical expertness no one need discount. But, in the long list of plays seen on his stage, none within recent years has moved the imagination deeply or stirred the intellect with any sense of permanent value. He has in all of his attractions — whether Mack's "Tiger Rose", Hopwood's "The Gold-Diggers", Guitry's "Deburau" or "The Grand Duke", Ervine's "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary" — shown his deftness, his care and love of detail. To all of these plays he has drawn the best of dramatic talent. But so many plays in the "new" era he has let pass! He has not seen them for his theatre. And they have gone to the "new" theatre, where they have strengthened a theatre era out of which Belasco seems to want to remain.

He quotes in the little bibliography, privately printed, two lines which are descriptive of him. Goethe says, "Without pause and without haste." That has been characteristic of David Belasco. He has followed his own gait: he has not been pushed into competition. To himself he is sufficient, and his loyal playgoers applaud him. Shakespeare says, "I am not weary, and 'tis long to night!" The indefatigable energy of the producer, the love of the theatre that is in him, make of Belasco a veritable boy of the playhouse. He still is in love with his bag of tricks. He produced Mack's "The Dove" with relish, declaring to his first-night audience

that he knew it would be good to them, as it was to him, to have a veritable "piece of the theatre", a true theatrical concoction. He presented David Warfield, in "The Merchant of Venice", with his mind's eye on the days of the golden acting of Booth and McCullough, and in the best traditions of Charles Kean and Henry Irving. When one considers how much that was bad in the theatrical past David Belasco has escaped; when one realizes that in the present he is watched by the younger generation, even though they scorn him; when one hears with what eagerness players seek his direction, one must place David Belasco on the side of the living theatre, rather than account him a rank reactionary, as the radicals are prone to call him.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Forms of American Drama: Comedy and the American Dramatist — Edward Harrigan and Charles Hoyt, George Ade and George M. Cohan in Particular

The American Theatre has created no special form of drama; it has not been original heretofore, in its rhythm of expression. It has modified types, it has infused much picturesque detail into local condition, it has expressed rather crudely all that is meant by American "uplift", but it has done so in form imitative of English and Continental examples.

But, at the present time, the American theatregoer is becoming conscious of form, inasmuch as ideas are in the air which cannot be satisfied with the old molds. If Augustus Thomas had had any spark of mysticism about him, he would have expressed his belief in telepathy through other channels than direct narrative; if the comic opera librettist had been brought up in the school of W. S. Gilbert, his "book" would have been more than a transitory vehicle; if the dramatist, who turned novels into plays, had only realized that even a dramatization has a technique and a unity apart from the novel itself, there would have been fewer failures in that direction.

The time is ripe for new form, and the only way in which we can determine what that shall be is to determine the real, true meaning of fundamental principles underlying the art. In our day we have seen changes and modifications in several forms; we have even witnessed the creation of special molds for special amusements. Melodrama rose to a certain pitch

of violence, then waned; musical comedy developed to a certain point, and remained there; ragtime music shaped a lyric as ungainly as the cakewalk dance; vaudeville, through the efforts of Tony Pastor, and later of Proctor and Keith, was evolved from the variety. Yet, as regards the latter, we have seen it persist, not only in vaudeville, but in comic opera as well. And now jazz and expressionism point the way.

It is only in the minor forms of theatrical art that we retrograded. In this very problem of comic opera, we reverted far from such a type of musical entertainment as Gilbert and Sullivan used to give. Music, song, and dance were welded together in a "show" that depended more on its topical "hit" than on any meaning the piece as a whole might have. Musical comedy has been nothing more nor less than the means of exploiting vaudeville reputation and variety glitter.

In fact, modern musical comedy is a hybrid type, of which the original was John Gay's "The Beggar's Opera" (1728), and it allows one to introduce any feature into the entertainment without disturbing the plot. In days gone by Harry B. Smith, author of "Rob Roy", "Robin Hood", "The Fortune Teller", and "The Wizard of the Nile"; Henry Blossom, who wrote the "books" for "The Yankee Consul", "Mlle. Modiste", and "The Red Mill"; Frank Pixley, who did "The Burgomaster", "King Dodo", and "The Prince of Pilsen" — they would have told you that the chief difficulty was in "boosting" a "book" after it was written, in securing the proper interpolated lyrics. George V. Hobart not only turned out scores of these flimsy "books", but he was regarded as a general renovator. Musical comedy was in constant need of a steady stream of oxygen.

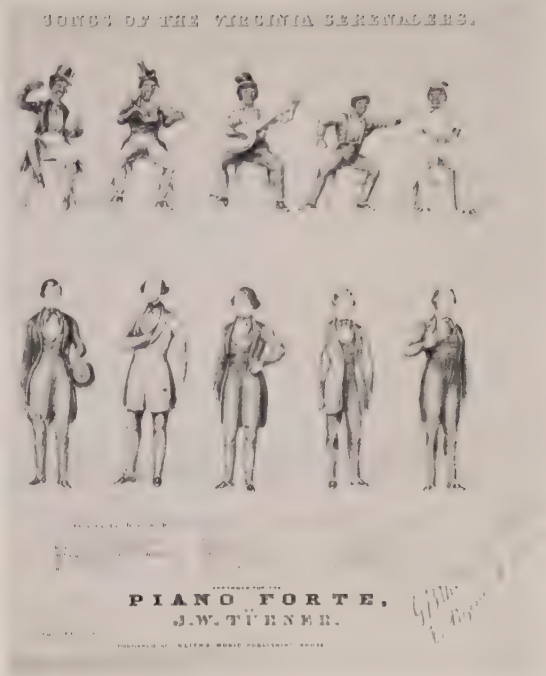
Fortunes have been made in the musical comedy field. The coöperation of Edgar Smith with Weber and Fields; of John McNally with the Rogers Brothers; the individual coups of Glen Macdonough's "The Wizard of Oz" and "Babes in Toyland", of Owen Hall's "Florodora", of Hugh Morton's "The Belle of New York" — these are sufficient evidences of the popularity of the form, apart from its permanence or its quality. The facts are these. George Ade's "The Sultan of

Sulu" was only a moderate success, yet it brought him a large income. George M. Cohan, librettist, composer, and actor, whose songs sell in the music stores, netting him a fortune, has been known to draw over three thousand dollars weekly as a librettist alone. That is what "Little Johnny Jones", "Forty-five Minutes from Broadway", and "Yankee Doodle" did for him, in days gone by.

But there is not one of these librettists or of these composers whose work has withstood more than a decade. There is no "book" that has had the vitality of Gilbert's "Patience", or "H. M. S. Pinafore", or "The Mikado." Not one of these names will outlast more than two generations, whereas Meilhac and Halévy are unmistakably identified with Bizet and Prosper Mérimée in "Carmen." Even such a transplanted and effective piece as Lehar's "The Merry Widow" was imitated, until the imitations dimmed its freshness. For the "book" was poor.

Experience shows that musical comedy abhorred consistency; it was a loose type, even as vaudeville is a loose type. It still is a loose type. These forms are full of tricks. Vaudeville, it is true, has become legitimitized by the introduction of the high-class artist, who gives a form of play in which our American dramatist would do well to indulge; I mean, the playlet. And the custom has now become so fixed that the best actor, no matter what his winter's work may be, does not disdain the comfortable fortune awaiting him in a few weeks' vaudeville. In this way Henry Miller has utilized Clyde Fitch's "Frédéric Lemaître." Vaudeville, however, has the pernicious effect of moving pictures; the audience is not held by any unified or consecutive interest; it is, in fact, one of the most casual of entertainments. Out from vaudeville has come excellent material, not of the variety type, but of the art type. Chevalier and Lauder and Genée have danced and sung, Mrs. Campbell has acted, and historians like to call to mind the days when even Edwin Booth did not disdain to blacken his face, or Edwin Forrest to dance a jig.

The chief characteristics of vaudeville will remain, however much its good points are abused by the variety inheritance.



EARLY MINSTRELS, FORERUNNERS OF THE AGE OF JAZZ

"Music, song, and dance were welded together in a 'show.'"

Reproductions from the originals in the Houdini Collection.

It is a form dependent on one's like for disassociation of ideas; it is amusement cultivating nervous strain rather than resulting in permanent effect. It has a "time clock" value.

The dramatization of novels cannot be called a new form, for Shakespeare looms in the past, an inimitable adapter of the *conte*. Professor Matthews, in his "Pen and Ink", has a suggestive chapter on this process, and we note that it has become a custom in every country to benefit by the inventive faculty of the novelist. For, while I have never been able to agree with Paul M. Potter, adapter of "Trilby", that the passionate story is all an audience seeks, I do believe that an interesting story, in novel form, might be very well utilized by the dramatist, but, mind you, in the dramatist's way. In other words, the latter must take liberties with the former, in so far as the technique of the latter differs from that of the former.

Mr. Potter was rash when he claimed that the drama was not dependent upon the intellectual element. But it is easy to fall into platitudes, and Mr. Potter's belief that "if the feelings of the audience are rightly moved, the play succeeds," proved nothing. For audiences are moved intellectually as well as passionately, and, what is more, they have a common spirit which passion only indirectly appeals to. When one looks back on "The Eternal City", "The Only Way", "The Prisoner of Zenda", "When Knighthood was in Flower", "Janice Meredith", and countless other dramatizations, when one reviews the work of Potter, of Rose, of Kester, and of an increasing host, one is tempted to believe that dramatization has become a form — a manufactured form — readily manipulated, but built only to last a season. We have seen how often the American dramatist has either dramatized or adapted. Boucicault lived upon the process; it even dulled his originality, though it did not paralyze his inventive resources.

But the ease with which novels have been turned into plays has created a mistaken idea in the novelist regarding the stage. The process has been detrimental to the drama as well as to the novel. There is no reason, however, why lasting plays

should not be taken from books, save that where there is a slavish dependence upon the story as told, there is a consequent lack of intensity and of close technique. The reading public scares the dramatizer, for, when a book is popular — and only popular books are dramatized — the dramatist has to keep faith with what the public already knows. Besides which, the public has shifted its loyalty somewhat. I am suspicious that they would much prefer to have a novel screened than dramatized. They are sure of getting more of the novel.

II

I do not think that it is so necessary for the student of American Drama to trace minutely the varying forms in which drama expresses itself. It is enough that we are imitative in farce, in comedy, in social drama, in the problem play, in every form imported from abroad. What should concern us, however, is a subject that narrows itself down to two points: comedy on one hand, and tragedy on the other. How fare these with us, not as form, but as spirit; not as convention, but as attitude, as national outlook?

If our American humor is what we claim it to be, then our comedy should be rich. And no one may complain of this, remembering Mark Twain, George Ade, and Peter F. Dunne (Mr. Dooley). If our American sanity is a fact, then our recognition of the Tragic Spirit, as opposed to any special form of tragedy, should be pronounced. Our American dramatists of the closet-drama employed the old classic form of catastrophe, but that has passed out of date with the coming of modern technique. Our early American humorists gave types caricatured as we have seen in *Sellers*, in *Solon Shingle*, and in others, but the human view, which lies at the basis of realism, has modified every form of comedy and tragedy, and there is only left the deep and abiding spirit of each with which to cope.

III

There is no business more speculative than that of defining things; lexicographers are not given the prophetic vision, and only one, so far — Doctor Johnson — has possessed the literary sense. No matter what limitation we place upon the meaning of a word, time overrides it and creates a periodic point of view.

Since Aristotle framed his classic definition of tragedy, we have been called upon to reckon with drama in terms of Shakespeare on one hand, and in terms of Ibsen and Maeterlinck on the other. Literary history has taught us to be wary of declaring old formulæ useless. Hence, there has become evolved a type of criticism which is more interesting because of its angle of vision than because it throws any deep and abiding light upon the fundamental starting point.

Professor Ashley Thorndike wrote a volume for a series called "The Types of English Literature", and he gave it the inclusive title of "Tragedy." What the reader finds to be the case is that, beginning with certain general premises, he discusses the modifications attendant upon all practice, and in this case subject to national characteristics. And, after reading through the chapters, a truth is impressed upon us: tragedy, as a mere form, is not constant, but is a convention of art, subject to conventional social ideas and ideals. The Tragic Spirit behind the sequence of things, or rather within and coincident with the evolution of humanity, is more eternal and more universal.

We have not yet had a treatise on the Tragic Spirit that has not paid greater attention to the comparative estimate of dramatists, in the university or academic manner, than to the psychological reasons for the existence of the spirit itself. Gummere considered the *vocero*, or tribal songs of grief; here is a primitive basis, unhindered by any cumbersome body of literature, — a basis upon which to reach some physical recognition of tragedy. Perhaps, in a small and not wholly satisfactory manner, W. L. Courtney has suggested quite as much of the historical perspective, in a survey of "The Idea of

Tragedy", as one would need, in order to arrive at some conception of the tragic, not as a form but as a principle.

Now, what has happened in this wild and seemingly ineffectual groping for the defining marks of tragedy? Aristotle, in true greatness of the Greek spirit, attempting to reduce the problem to its simplest points, yet including all its essential connections with life, as the Greek philosophers saw life, used general rather than specific terms: "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper *katharsis*, or purgation, of these emotions."

The danger of literary study is that, too often, we are side-tracked by minor interesting problems. Not only are there students working in the oppressive style so well exemplified in Dr. Schelling's "Elizabethan Drama", where streams of fact measure a certain orderliness of mind, without expressing the breadth of spiritual view — forgetful of the life and of the personality in the fractional difference of the fact — but a literature has grown up around the interpretation of a word. In Butcher's translation of Aristotle, he analyzes the Greek conception of "the function of tragedy", and deals with those critics, including Lessing and Goethe, who have debated and challenged the translation of the word *katharsis*, or purgation. You see how subtly one may be drawn into a profound discussion of the ethics of an art, losing sight of the essentials under consideration.

The subject is a big one and a human one; on one hand, you have the conventions of the stage in different ages, affecting the form of tragedy; on the other, there are the moral and social standards which have moved the individual along the scale of increasing importance. We have had considered for us Greek tragedy, Roman tragedy, and, in modern times, tragedy reacted upon by English, French, German, Spanish, and Italian temperament. But the basic reasons for the support and development of the Tragic Spirit, whatever the environ-

ment, have not been given a popular exposition. That Americans, for example, do not care for tragedy as a form of drama, and blind themselves to the Tragic Spirit, is not due to a predominating cry in the illogical vein of the Dr. Fell couplet. Nor may we go so deep as ethnology for an explanation. But a perspective view of our human response to social and economic fact will give us cause to believe that comedy, in its richest sense, measures our dramatic taste.

In Greek tragedy, we consider the abstract will struggling against a religious attitude toward Fate. In Shakespeare, there is the human will centered upon personality, struggling, not against Fate, but against time and circumstance. In Ibsen and Maeterlinck, the stage contracts, becomes centered in personality affected by all the currents of time. I have elsewhere said that Ibsen unfailingly approached optimism, save in the case of "Hedda Gabler" and "The Wild Duck", through pessimistic channels; that his indignation was health giving and counteracted the bitter realism of his temporal contemplation. Maeterlinck, in the tracks of Emerson, has taken all the abstract ideas of the Greeks — the concepts of destiny, righteousness, truth — moving in an outside sphere, and has compressed them within and around the individual.

Tragedy at one time maintained the idea that only the highly bred, the kings, the princes of the universe, were subject to the cataclysmic reversals of Nature. But the modern note accentuates a democratic level, and, as we have "The Treasure of the Humble", so we, perforce, come to consider "the tragical in daily life."

"I have grown to believe," writes Maeterlinck, "that an old man, seated in his arm-chair, waiting patiently, with his lamp beside him; giving unconscious ear to all the eternal laws that reign about his house; interpreting, without comprehending, the silence of doors and windows, and the quivering voice of the light; submitting with bent head to the presence of his soul and his destiny, . . . motionless as he is, does yet live in reality a deeper, more human, and more universal life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the cap-

tain who conquers in battle, or 'the husband who avenges his honor.'"

Here, then, the modern concept of tragedy, even in its formal state, takes on a new aspect; the heightened swing of blank verse has had to contend with the commonplace vitality of Ibsen prose. But the essence of the form, which is the Tragic Spirit, has become almost personal in its source.

In most cases, literary history has shown that dramaturgic conventions may generally be defied. The comic idea has spread in such directions as to approach the tragic. Some one refused lately to write a book on comedy because the subject was so inclusive in its reach, under modern theatrical nomenclature. No longer does a tragedy necessarily imply death; no longer does death have to occur off the stage. Dramatic technique has thrown into temporary disuse the soliloquy, which largely expressed narratively what Ibsen could place into seemingly trite dialogue, what Maeterlinck, in such a perfect piece of psychology and clinical observation as "The Blind", treats through the atmospheric quality of his Ollendorfian talk — which is only Ollendorfian, by the way, when it is badly read.

Maeterlinck has given us "The Life of the Bee"; neither has science refuted his observation nor economics his social statement; yet primarily his essay is no text-book on apiculture, no discussion of the social unit. My contention is that scholarship only half sees, or, more aptly, sees only half of the subject it considers. Tragedy needs yet to be viewed in the Maeterlinckian fulness.

This does not mean that one should try to sense instinctively the Tragic Spirit, though the true artist assuredly becomes freer as he divines his substance and its essential form, rather than bases it upon studied or remembered models. One writes tragedy only when the Tragic Spirit moves him forcefully, only when it emanates from the material which is his choice. I quote Maeterlinck: "None but yourself shall you meet on the highway of Fate. If Judas go forth to-night it is toward Judas his steps will tend."

Life is so closely knit with the tragic and the comic, that

defining will not account for all the forms that arise therefrom. Abstractly stated, we see the Tragic Spirit as one unchangeable principle — wherein agony, despair, grief, pain, tend toward the dissolution of the human will. Comedy may yield to the darker balance of life, becoming serious, grave, even destructive, yet still we would keep from designating it as tragedy.

Therefore, even though "A Doll's House" and "Ghosts" be painful in their outcome, though "Hannele" wrench the heart with its pathetic child symbol, though Pinero's "Iris" be the tragic dragging of a woman into the gutter, we theatregoers are at a want for the phrase by which to call them. Ibsen wrote no tragedies during his later life, in the accepted sense of the word; yet in no modern playwright is the Tragic Spirit so clearly realizable — which in no way detracts from his positive influence.

Somehow, form has crept into the popular conception of the outward expression by which the Tragic Spirit is recognized. Is it necessary to have the lofty style, the exaggerated speech, the melancholy event, the florid diction, the stately action? Then truly the cottage and cabin are no scenes for tragedy, and the commonplace contains no essence of the same. It is the great flow of circumstance, of time, of infinitude around the lowly, that must be reconciled with the accustomed height and swing of the art form.

Verily, the student's perspective is needed by the writer on tragedy, but it is his imagination and his constructive ability that will aid him most. For the Tragic Spirit in man is that which gives life to tragedy, and the product may only be a faint reflex of the principle. That is where Greek art overreached the limits of its time; it was conceived clearly in the spirit of highest Greek endeavor; it was based upon the concepts of eternal principles. Thinking was not imitative; it was pristine. Men spoke like oracles, stating law as above fact.

Tragedy, as a form of art, is at the present furthest removed from the American spirit — from the democratic spirit. I, nevertheless, take the attitude that we must not blind our-

selves to the existence of the Tragic Spirit, even though we do not accept tragedy, *per se*, on our boards. Ibsen's voice proclaims its presence underlying the ills of our social organism; Maeterlinck's philosophy shows the lowliest soul confronted by the problems of eternity. We respond in terms of the comic, but the American people cannot be blind to the tragic in their lives.

We meet misfortune in the comedy spirit of youth. Take the ravages of the Civil War and the epic response afterward among Southerners, who faced the future with supernal faith. Take the San Francisco earthquake and the reaction that resulted in the rebuilding of a city. No one will deny the presence there of the tragic element. Perhaps we are prone to lose sight of it in the reaction of the American spirit itself, after the tragic event.

Undoubtedly, the old dramatic terms, though rigidly defined by lexicographers, are becoming too narrow to hold the varying forms. And, no doubt, beginning with the principle of Ibsen on one hand, and with that of Maeterlinck on the other, we are tending toward a new form of drama. But, at present, we need some treatise on tragedy which will estimate its essential spirit as well as its human expression. We speak frankly in our magazines and on our stage of conditions involving sexual relations and struggles in environment. Yet, though we see souls dragged to the depths of despair in Walter's "The Easiest Way", though Jones's "Mrs. Dane's Defence" gives us another form of social evil, and Nirdlinger, in "The World and His Wife", represents the grave consequences of social gossip, still we find staring us in the face on our program the word "comedy." And our attitude becomes that of comedy toward the vital problems of life, simply because we will not countenance on our stage, or in our ordinary pursuits, the form of tragedy, and we have failed to identify in our national life the presence of a Tragic Spirit.

IV

The Comic Spirit is an illusive factor in literary history; it is a deep and subtle principle in life. Raised from its Bacchic origin, it has become the very core of sanity, it has become the true moral corrective of tragedy. Perhaps we are losing sight of this in our demand that a name cover many species, until at last the pure type is confounded with the hybrid. But, nevertheless, for richness of humanity, for breadth of view, for deep understanding, the Comic Spirit has a range that embraces a large sweep of life.

To him who views the world aright, there are always the action and reaction, the tension and relief. In tragedy, the emotions are so powerfully involved that one is no longer able to measure the deviation from the normal view; but a real value of the Comic Spirit depends almost wholly upon our realization of how far we have deflected from the truth. We can only reach the latter state when we have adequately become informed of the former. We arrive at the pure comic when we have sounded the depths of full existence.

Now, this view of comedy has been lost to the present-day playgoer; most of our writers either avoid the subject as being too abstract for journalistic purposes, or else discuss new forms herded together under an old name. If we look into the philosophy of the matter, we find the psychologist too intent upon the physiological reasons as to why we laugh, and the metaphysician too loath to handle the subject in the concrete. Yet, in the scattered cases where writing has been done on the Comic Spirit, the humanistic aspect has been surely persisting, and its right to be regarded as the sane view seems justified in the light of accomplishment.

Within past years, we have had evidences of an existing sense of the Comic Spirit among our dramatists and players. J. M. Barrie would approach very near to it, if his piquancy of outlook was not limited by an agreeable mannerism of narrative style. After a fashion, he defined the true comedy position when, in "What Every Woman Knows", *Maggie Wylie*

declared that no one could love her who couldn't laugh at her a little.

When Percy MacKaye wrote "Mater", his intention was to imbue American conditions with the essence of comedy, illustrating by way of political satire the fundamental note in life, that "the test of love — and the best of love — is laughter." But his spiritual desire was more defined than his understanding of the body politic, and Mr. MacKaye's Comic Spirit, as expressed, came in flashes rather than in even flow.

Paul Kester, essaying to make a drama from "Don Quixote", conceived his knight-errant in terms of situation, rather than in terms of the rich defects of the character. In this latter respect, Mr. Sothern was the only one who approached Cervantes' original conception — to picture the weakness of over-romantic chivalry, at the same time fully realizing the innate perfectness of the true gentleman. His acting raised Mr. Kester's play, by enforcing the personal dignity of the character.

Take what comedy you will, in which there flows any of the red blood of life, and, after analysis, you will find that the Comic Spirit is not haphazard, is not shallow, is not easy to grasp. One must be very near to life in order to feel it, and must have asked one's self questions regarding the eternal verities.

I have chosen to confine myself entirely to the Comic Spirit as affecting drama, realizing at the outset that we must not identify it exclusively with the stage, inasmuch as we have Thackeray, Balzac, La Fontaine, Cervantes, Rabelais, and Chaucer richly entitled to consideration in the larger field. But I am taking the stage, for I am aware that, curiously, it is there that the fullest meaning of the Comic Spirit is in greatest danger of being submerged. There have been audiences so regaled by the fun-making of Eddie Foy and James T. Powers — thoroughly clever as far as they went — that those same audiences could not see anywhere in the theatre the sweet human defects that bring one to the verge of tears. Why not, they argued, call "'Op o' My Thumb" a tragedy, and be done with it?

All is not gold that glisters, saith the proverb; which means, theatrically, that our stage is too filled with song and dance to comprehend the Comic Spirit. Richard Mansfield never once builded upon our reaching the human and interpretative importance of Molière's "Misanthrope." He planned simply to satisfy his own desire to add to the honor of the stage; he was not disappointed, for Molière was not a popular success. Yet it is the duty of our critics to point the way to what the Comic Spirit means in the affairs of life. Our stage revivals are often received with too much willingness to understand the archæological shroud, and with no cultural perspective to note wherein the unctuousness and live quality rest. The "new" art has done much to make alive a spirit which has too long been overburdened with scholasticism. It is part of the university's province to quicken this spirit.

I believe it is given the audience to sense the essence of the comic without knowing why or how. This is seen in that instantaneous response of the reading public, for example, to Aldrich, to Mark Twain, to Holmes; and in the merry laugh over "Uncle Remus." I see the Comic Spirit swell the meaty substance of Henry James's sentences. It is not that the Comic Spirit is wanting, but that our vision of it has been warped by other forms which are, in comparison, even as paste jewels. It is surprising that we have so much of the richness of the comic, in the face of newspaper supplements and musical comedies. We will have greater plays of the Comic Spirit just as soon as we are everywhere alive to its whole value. It were well for us, indeed, when we reach that stage of culture where we can grasp the humor of our faith, without in the least relinquishing its sanctity. In deep reverence, I have heard portions of the Book of Mark read for the purpose of illustrating the rich essence of Christ's humor. Comedy and right living are closely related ideas.

At the beginning of a chapter on "Greek and Roman Comedy", in Professor Matthews' "The Development of the Drama", the author attempts to indicate a terse distinction between tragedy, serious drama, and comedy, basing the whole upon Brunetière's law — which, after all, is only Brune-

tière's restatement of the law of drama from time immemorial — that all drama deals with the exercise of the human will. "If," so writes Professor Matthews, "the obstacle against which the will of the hero finally breaks itself is absolutely insurmountable, the Greek idea of Fate, for example, the Christian decree of Providence, or the modern scientific doctrine of heredity, then we have tragedy, pure and simple. If the obstacle is not absolutely insurmountable, being no more than the social law, something of man's own making, and therefore not finally inexorable, then we have the serious drama. If the obstacle is only the desire of another human being, then the result of the contention of these two characters is likely to give us a comedy. And if the obstacle is merely one of the minor conventions of society, then we may have farce."

These are merely perfunctory demarcations, with only one phase of the matter indicated; for, in no way do the several definitions clearly denote the measurement of the comic or tragic clash with the norm. The ethical, moral value of laughter lies in the fact that it makes us more sane, by bringing more truly into relief, through some slight incongruity of motive or situation, the benefits of the normal life. Throughout his discussion of Aristotle, Butcher is continually emphasizing the humanistic, philosophical view of comedy, which distinguishes the modern from the ancient. He lays stress upon Hobbes's claim that "the passion of laughter is nothing else but a sudden glory, arising from a sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison of the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly." The high comic poet must taste of life healthily, and see that it is good, before he formulates a table of contrasts. Knowing life, as it is given the big man to know it, he allows himself to throw relations out of harmony to the point where he is in danger of losing all hold upon the sane view.

The Comic Spirit, therefore, represents one of the highest factors, if not the highest, in life. From the modern standpoint, it approaches closer to the ethical demand, since it represents optimism rather than pessimism. "Comic emotion,"

Doctor W. N. Guthrie claims, "originates from the co-existence of a perception of incongruity and a persistent conviction, not probably more than half conscious and in all likelihood quite inexplicit, that in despite of such incongruity things are right."

The Greeks did not conceive the Comic Spirit in as pure a state as they did the Tragic Spirit; they could not wholly separate it from the Bacchic on one hand, or from the satiric on the other. "The ludicrous," as defined by Aristotle, "consists in some defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive." The Greeks denied tears to laughter; they well-nigh sacrificed sympathy. There was some malice in their enjoyment of "discomfiture", as Butcher so well analyzes. They did not look to the comic for a criticism of life in general; they narrowed to the individual, sacrificing the type; they satirized with no regard for sane restraint. To them the Comic Spirit dwelt within the lower types.

Turning attention next to comedy in Shakespeare, we meet with a rich humanistic view of character, devoid of buffoonery; one finds its full value in the portraits of *Viola* and of *Malvolio*. Life is warm, replete in sunshine here, with no poisoned shafts, but ripe in sympathy with human foibles, with kindliness. "Twelfth Night" is Shakespeare's midsummer in comedy, declares Professor Dowden.

In a broad sense, Molière is more nearly representative of the Comic Spirit than Shakespeare, although in a few instances the latter attained the pinnacle of preëminence. The former, however, clearly illustrates that perfection with which the comedy of manners, exquisitely representing its age, may likewise embrace a universal consideration. Scribe is Molière perverted.

"I can never care for seeing Things that force me to entertain low Thoughts of my Nature," wrote Congreve, in a letter concerning "Humor in Comedy." Take this statement in consideration with the moral status of his theatre, and we begin to realize that it was only through his grasp of the Comic Spirit that Congreve was preserved out of the general licentiousness of the time. He had the faults of his social environment; his genius rose above them, however identified with

them, however shaped by them. Congreve means brilliancy of dialogue, and a sense of comic values, as soon as you are able to realize that he represents also a certain phase of English dramatic evolution.

This is no simple subject that we are examining so cursorily. Its proper consideration involves racial and national limitations and differences. What you smile over, I may not. What the English critic defines as comedy, the German critic may deny; the one believes in a permanent effect of comedy, the other in a transitory effect. To enforce this view, Doctor Paul Hamelius quotes Kant's "Kritik of Judgment", which defines "laughter as an emotion occasioned by the sudden resolution of a roused expectation into nothing."

Therefore, generally speaking, the German conception of comedy, as represented in Schlegel, is wild and lawless; and, in true German manner, the philosophers, in especial Hegel, interpret the effect this "ignorance of self-restraint" has upon individuality and its vital relations to life, to cause and effect.

The book has yet to be written which will define the Comic Spirit in terms here suggested; the subject is so broad as to make the university worker hesitate. We want a vital discussion, in which tendencies, racial and social, are indicated; it is not enough that individual plays be defined in the scholar's manner. For the average reader is not familiar with plays of much wide diversity of range. That is why George Meredith is perhaps so little known to the general public as an analyzer of "comedy" in a special essay; it is full of learning, of great familiarity with stage history from the closet standpoint. He views his subject with the eye of the novelist. Yet his humanistic approach toward his discursive point of view is replete with unerring appreciation of the true value. "To be an exalted variety," he writes, "is to come under the calm, curious eye of the Comic Spirit, and be probed for what you are." Again he proclaims that "Comedy is the fountain of sound sense", all expressions of which are deeply conceived, and which, in themselves, refine even to pain.

V

In analyzing the essence of American humor, Charles Johnston[1] once made an excellent distinction between humor and wit, in both of which there must be the element of laughter. He writes:

If there is a play of mind about difference of race, using this as the laughter-rousing contrast which is common to both wit and humor, and if this play of thought and feeling accentuates and heightens the race difference, and tries to show, or assume, as is often the case, that the race of the joker is endlessly superior to the other, then we are dealing with wit, an amusing thing enough in its way, but a false thing, one which leads us away from the true end of man. If, on the other hand, we have an accentuation of the common life, bridging the chasm of race, and the overplus of power is felt to be shared in by the two races, and to unite them, then we have genuine humor, something as vital to our true humanity as is the Tragedy of Greece, as is the Evangel of Galilee, yet something more joyful and buoyant than either; uniting us, not through comparison or the sense of common danger, but through the sense of common power, a prophecy of the golden age, of the ultimate triumph of the soul.

Consider these differences carefully, and it will be seen how reversed are the essential spirits of comedy and farce. These are not alone two forms of drama; they are also two outlooks upon life. The great fault with the American dramatist is that often he hides the richness of his humor beneath the incongruity of witty situation; he spoils the good-natured satire of his intention by using cartoon actions. This was the weakness of Charles Hoyt (1860–1900), author of "A Parlor Match", "A Rag Baby", "Old Sport", "A Trip to Chinatown", "A Texas Steer", "A Temperance Town", "A Contented Woman" (1895), and "A Milk White Flag." His satire was spontaneous, but he became self-conscious whenever he attempted to cross the border into farce. In Hoyt's plays there was an admixture of insight and shallowness.

[1] *Atlantic*, 87; 195–202, 1901.

I should say, therefore, that his farce-comedies were marked by humor, but were spoiled by the form of farce. As for Edward Harrigan (1845–1911), he must be characterized as a delineator of a special type, and, with his partner, Tony Hart, he built up the reputation which won him support. For the two were funmakers, as Weber and Fields and the Rogers Brothers were funmakers. In 1871, Harrigan and Hart began their careers in "The Mulcaney Twins."

In his very delightful book, "The Seven Lively Arts", Gilbert Seldes makes an eloquent plea for the lighter forms of entertainment in this age of the "new" art and the "new" drama. "I feel moderately certain," he writes, "that the slapstick comedy is a good thing for America to have; yet, being neither an apostle of pagan joy nor a reformer, I have to put my plea for slap-stick on personal grounds. It has given me immeasurable entertainment and I would like to see it saved; I would like to see a bit more of its impromptus, its unpremeditated laughter; I would like to do something to banish the bleak refinement which is setting in upon it."

In this book, Mr. Seldes is talking about the work of Charlie Chaplin, he is interpreting the ragtime and jazz of Irving Berlin and George Gershwin, he is lauding the modern newspaper funny strip. He can see no distinct source for these; they are emanations of a nervous age, the true rhythms of the time. But there are sources for them, and had Mr. Seldes examined into the lively arts of the seventies and eighties, he might have found them. The theatre in America is very forgetful of its past; it turns quickly to new inventions, and allows others with vitality in them to pass away. Minstrelsy, vaudeville, burlesque have all had their big day in the American Theatre, and then either disappeared or else become absorbed in other forms. The minstrel show is no longer the craze, but the blackened faces of Al Jolson and Frank Tinney suggest that there is a relationship. Much of the burlesque quality and extravaganza color of the seventies went into the musical comedy, and the slapstick of Hoyt's farces went over into the modern broad farce-comedy. When I think of the various popular songs which have shrieked from the grama-

phone, the sentimental coon songs that have graced the stages of vaudeville and moving picture, my mind reverts to the Harrigan era, when the music of Dave Braham, and the subject matter of the Harrigan lyrics, set the town singing and the veriest newsboy whistling. There were lively arts as surely then as now. I have had letters from friends of Mr. Hoyt, speaking in eloquent terms of the refreshment his roaring comments on local and timely matters gave to audiences of those days. Were it possible to make a clinical chart of the laughter of audiences, one might reach the conclusion that the response to Harrigan and Hoyt and Weber and Fields was as great as that to Chaplin, though not of so wide a range, since the film has an international horizon. · They were truly representative of their time. They brought to the theatre ironical comments on imminent questions of public interest. They unearthed the lowly character, pictured special phases of city life and of country life that were not usually dealt with in literature or art. Hoyt's wide experience as a cattle ranger, a reporter, a politician, a theatre man, gave him ample opportunity to create types that would appeal to the man on the street. In those days whole regiments of soldiers used to crowd the theatres to see a Hoyt farce or a Harrigan spectacle. They used to bring with them floral emblems and give them to the actors between acts. There was no half-hearted response to the wholesome, clean fun of such drama. The papers could not gainsay its appeal. Characters in the Harrigan dramas passed from one piece to another; they were acted with a verisimilitude that gave them actuality. Fads and fancies were seized upon, public issues were treated broadly and with some effect. One has only to read what Brander Matthews has to say of such entertainment in "These Many Years", and James L. Ford's tribute in "Forty-Odd Years in the Literary Shop", to measure the importance of such lively art.

Those who gave thought to the American Drama of the time hailed such entertainment as utilizing the very sinew of American life; the materials were native, racy, first-hand. W. D. Howells called Harrigan the Goldoni of America; the papers — with less insight — spoke of him as our Ameri-

can Dickens. Professor Brander Matthews referred to the teamwork of Weber and Fields as Aristophanic. Every one realized that Hoyt raised the farce to commercial value. Sometimes, as I read the "expressionistic" plays of the present, I wonder if, in fairness to Harrigan and Hoyt, one should not say that they were equally as expressionistic. Soon after witnessing "Processional", the jazz drama by John Howard Lawson, I read through most of Harrigan's plays — poor reading from a literary standpoint, but, for any one with a sense of the theatre, palpitant stuff which must have been raised to a high level by the character of acting Harrigan and his company gave. Lawson's *dramatis personæ* were types similar to the types selected by Harrigan; the Negro, the soldier, the old-clothes dealer, the wealthy man, the side-show barker, the dance hall. But Lawson assembled these isolated elements self-consciously: his characters became almost types of a morality play. His was not an effort to depict lowly types for themselves alone, for their local atmosphere, but his was an endeavor to suggest, through the medium of incongruous elements, the jazz rhythms of American life. He has come nearer a great thing than he realizes. But his effects are no different from the effects of the "Mulligan Guards" series, which helped to bring fame and fortune to Harrigan.

Here were plays that still live in the memory of those who witnessed them. Not such can be said of most of the plays created to-day. "Come to New Hampshire," writes one of Mr. Hoyt's friends, "and I will show you where *Mink* lived, and 'The Temperance Town' will become real to you." "Shall we ever forget the mule in Harrigan's 'Pete'?" asked one newspaper. "It came on in the third act, bearing a white Baptist minister, who happened on a colored Baptist camp-meeting by an old Florida mill, just in time to marry a couple who were wild for a parson." There can be no study of ward politics in the city of New York without some familiarity with Harrigan's multi-colored plays. He could write of the glories of Shanty Town, he revelled in the small humors of contrasted types in the barber shop, the saloon, on "our

street", and on "our stoop." The ironies of journalism were his special delight, and he could make the most of those simple happenings, which, like the girl who learned her trade in Cherry Street opening a shop on Fifth Avenue, gave the very substance of a city life, now almost unknown to the average theatregoer. Insistently as Harrigan dwelt upon such aspects, and insistently as he was hailed by audiences who kept his plays on long runs and return engagements, his method did not take deep root, and created no "school." But now that the system of politics with which Harrigan was familiar has changed, there is an historical value to his dramas which cannot be discounted. The student must be familiar with the general tenor of his work. Writes Mr. Howells:

Our one original contribution and addition to histrionic art was Negro minstrelsy, which, primitive, simple, elemental, was out of our own soil, and had the characteristics that distinguish autochthonic conceptions. But that is a thing almost of the past [Mr. Howells is writing in *Harper's Magazine*, The Editor's Study, in the eighties], and we have now to do with a novel contribution to the drama, and not to the art of the drama. It is peculiarly interesting, because it is morally, though not materially, the contribution most possible under our peculiar circumstances, for it is the work of a man in whom the instincts of the author combat the theatre's traditions, and the actor's experience censures the author's literary vanity. . . . Mr. Harrigan accurately realizes in his scenes what he realizes in his persons; that is, the actual life of this city. He cannot give it all; he can only give phases of it; and he has preferred to give its Irish-American phases in their rich and amusing variety, and some of its African and Teutonic phases. It is what we call low life, though whether it is essentially lower than fashionable life is another question. But what it is, it is; and it remains for others, if they can, to present other sides of our manifold life with equal perfection; Mr. Harrigan leaves a vast part of the vast field open. In his own province we think he cannot be surpassed. The art that sets before us all sorts and conditions of New York Irishmen, from the laborers in the street to the most powerful of the ward politicians and the genteelest of the ladies of that inter-

esting race, is the art of Goldoni — the joyous yet conscientious art of the true dramatist in all times who loves the life he observes.

It is not my intention to continue that thought here, but it is a thought worth remembering. For, strange to say, it is to those fundamental points of the American Drama that the student has failed to give due importance. The theatre critics were aware of Harrigan's value at the time; the unbroken laughter of the audience was as much a part of the play as the actors on the stage; they gave pause for it; their songs lilted the popular sentimental angle. Scenes grotesque were warm with humanity: new fads, like massage treatment, the lady doctor, tobogganing, suggested certain satire to Hoyt. Harrigan was a student of all this life which marked New York of the eighties; he did not cut himself aloof, but wandered along the streets where the lower life disported itself. He frequented political clubs, white and colored; a cakewalk drew him after the theatre. In a Bowery restaurant, they say, he found his colored chaplain of the *Skidmore Guards* waiting on the table; in a butcher shop he found the model for *Lochmüller*, of the *Mulligan* series. Realist that he was, he would spend infinite pains in costuming his plays. It took him a long, weary search before he was able to locate a coat which would be appropriate for a certain Irish pedagogue. "I consider," he once said, "that the staging and management are half the battle." From his mother, who was a Southerner, he learned the real Negro dialect. He never treated character on hearsay. The Southern scenes in "Pete", the young Florida Negress, the aldermanic couple from New York, the white trash, the circuit rider, the "gentleman of the old school", were painted by him with the sitter ever before his eye.

One can easily brush aside the ingenuity of Harrigan's plots, which were loosely hung together, or else old-fashioned in their melodramatic excitement. There is nothing more painful to read to-day than "Old Lavender", which drips with the sentiment of a stereotyped kind. In cold print, the ab-

Collection Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

EDWARD HARRIGAN AND TONY HART IN "THE MULLIGAN GUARDS."

"Harrigan's art," said W. D. Howells, "was the art of Goldoni."

EDWARD HARRIGAN (1845–1911)

Old Lavender.	Theatre Comique, New York, September 3, 1877.
The Lorgaire; or, The Murder of the Black Rock.	Theatre Comique, New York, February 8, 1878.
The Mulligan Guard Picnic.	Theatre Comique, New York, September 23, 1878.
The Mulligan Guard Ball.	Theatre Comique, New York, January 13, 1879.
The Mulligan Guard Chowder.	Theatre Comique, New York, August 11, 1879.
The Mulligan Guard Christmas.	Theatre Comique, New York, November 17, 1879.
The Mulligan Guard Surprise.	Theatre Comique, New York, February 16, 1880.
The Mulligan Guard Nominee.	Theatre Comique, New York, November 22, 1880.
Mulligan's Silver Wedding.	Theatre Comique, New York, February 21, 1881.
Squatter Sovereignty.	Theatre Comique, New York, January 9, 1882.
The Blackbird.	Theatre Comique, New York, August 28, 1882.
Mordecai Lyons.	Theatre Comique, New York, October 30, 1882.
McSorley's Inflation.	Theatre Comique, New York, November 27, 1882.
Cordelia's Aspirations.	Theatre Comique, New York, November 5, 1883.
Dan's Tribulations.	Theatre Comique, New York, April 7, 1884.
The Leather Patch.	Park Theatre, New York, February 15, 1886.
The O'Reagans.	Park Theatre, New York, October 11, 1886.
Reilly and the Four Hundred.	Harrigan's Theatre, New York, December 29, 1890.
The Last of the Hogans.	Harrigan's Theatre, New York, December 21, 1891.

For current criticisms, see such a periodical as the *Spirit of the Times*, New York. Howells is quoted on Harrigan in the *Dramatic Mirror* for 1896.

surdities of the *Mulligan* series are not stirring; but the eye imagines the possibilities of the scenes on the stage. "Squatter Sovereignty" the papers hailed as a triumph for our only distinctive drama. Never was Tony Hart funnier than as the *Widow Nolan*, wearing clothes such as only Ireland could produce. Comedy was uppermost in such drama. The characters were not surrounded with the tragic poetry of their own tradition; but we had here the Irishman reacted upon by New York and "ward" politics.

The art was typically expressionistic in the hands of the actors; not in the written play. The manuscript was created afresh nightly by the players who made mountains out of molehills. And people of all classes flocked into the Harrigan theatres, which were treats in themselves, — institutions rather than playhouses. Each season the Coney Island boats were melodious with the songs of the current Harrigan success. Sheet music and portfolios were issued, remindful of a later day when George Cohan contributed to popular song. It was as natural to hear these tunes at the Lotos Club as on the Third Avenue cars. To-day, in the summer, as one walks the streets of lower New York, one sees banners stretched from pole to pole, proclaiming an outing of some social club. Harrigan kept his eye on the Mystic Shriners, and the Knights of the Mystic Star. There were many smaller clubs like them. I cull from my note-book the names of some of the song successes: "The Little Widow Dunn", "The Skids Are Out To-day", "Johnny Reilly's Always Dry", "The Babies on our Block", "My Little Side Door", "The Last of the Hogans", "Down in Gossipy Row." "All hail," cried the papers in accord, "to New York's Molière and Offenbach"; thus did they regard Harrigan and Dave Braham.

Useless indeed would it be to give an idea of Harrigan's method. There was a certain madness in it, just as there was a certain method in the madness. But the isolated humors were studies in themselves of large town feuds and sociableness in unfrequented quarters. Fourteenth Street still has suggestion of the life. The melodramas of Owen Davis and Theodore Kremer made use of it. The dialogue is difficult to

quote, just as Weber and Fields' fun is difficult to suggest. For the jokes, while of the joke-book kind when read, were characteristic of vivid character when acted. In a *Judge's* office the Negroes and Irish crowd are fighting among themselves for chairs. *Esau*, the parson, exhorts his people: "Git up, Ladies and Gentlemen, de Parlor's no different from a horse car wid dese people [meaning the Irish]." *Angie*, the girl of all work, complains: "I'm a *femme de chambre*. I sweep tapestry, dust velvet and polish de ivories of de piano. I scrub nuffin." On Bleeker Street, so *Esau* complains, the Italians are imminent. "Yes, ma'am," he says, "it's razor against stiletto," and he further comments: "De walking delegates of de Committe of Shooting Stars report 2000 Italian bootblack stands and 33 Stars from de Battery to Union Square." There is a gorgeous initiation scene among the Shooting Stars, a colored secret society. *Esau* says to the Lodge: "Brudders, I hope dat you'll be a little lenient wid de candidate, as de last sister dat took dis degree am now in Bellevue, wrapped up in rubber blankets." All these bits are from "The Last of the Hogans." The humor is well knit to the character; the rough and tumble of action somehow evolves an atmosphere redolent with life.

Harrigan often wrote about his work as a dramatist, and he wrote well about it; speak to his son, William Harrigan, who is on the stage, of his father as an actor, and he will quote certain succinct comments remembered by him which are at the basis of the finest realistic acting; like Herne, Mr. Harrigan brought to his art the keenest perceptions. In fact, in the history of the American Drama there are no better examples of unremitting vitality and exuberance than are to be found in his many plays. To the theatre belong the association of Harrigan and Hart as players. But to the drama, Harrigan alone remains as one of the distinct figures of the eighteen-eighties and nineties.

The satire which characterized the Hoyt farces was stronger than that to be found in the Harrigan dramas; he inquired humorously into the aspects of many national questions; he ridiculed Congressmen in "A Texas Steer"; he played up

the suffrage movement in "A Contented Woman." One remembers his famous toast: "Here's to woman, — once our superior, now our equal." The unfortunate thing is that Hoyt nearly always hid his true intention beneath a mass of inconsequent frivolity which dulled the points of his situations. The temperance movement produced the excellent "Temperance Town", which might even now hit audiences with some potency. His characters were symbols of their main defects, and their names played upon their weaknesses. This was a mannerism of Hoyt's, as was the superstition that no play of his would be a success, unless it began with the article "A." I note the following: *I. McCorker*, a literary man; *Lotta Howlin*, a deaf lady, in "A Parlor Match." *Harry Younghusband*, a new father, and *Christian Berriel*, an undertaker, in "A Rag Baby." *Wright Handy*, a carpenter, and *Trip Walker*, a mail carrier, are in "A Tin Soldier." In order to show the variety of his types, I give a few more of these *dramatis personæ* play on words: *Brooklyn Bridge*, a gentleman of high position, and *Mrs. Fulton Ferry*, his mother-in-law, in "A Tin Soldier"; *Doolittle Work*, a young man who has greatness thrust upon him; *Dodge Work*, a revengeful man, and *Savage Hogg*, a man who wants his rights, — all in "A Brass Monkey." In "A Trip to Chinatown" we have the famous *Welland Strong*, a man with one foot in the grave. The prefatory note to "A Brass Monkey" suggests the casualness of the Hoyt farce. He writes:

"A Brass Monkey" is a somewhat desultory reference to a variety of subjects having no particular relevancy to what little plot there may be in the play. There is an endeavor to make a little mild fun on the 1001 petty superstitions of the day which everybody derides and secretly believes in, more or less. There is an attempt to illustrate the sincerity of obtrusive grief and to show the difficulties that may beset an inexperienced man in running an auction room. In *Birdie*, the correspondent of the Society Gazette, the author has attempted to satirize the guerillas of journalism, who, by their outrages upon truth and decency, have managed to create more or less prejudice against an honorable profession

CHARLES HOYT (1860–1900)

For bibliography and list of plays, see Moses' "Representative American Dramas: National and Local."

A Rag Baby.	Haverly's Theatre, Chicago, Ill., August 16, 1884.	
A Brass Monkey.	Bijou Theatre, New York, October 15, 1888.	
A Texas Steer; or, 'Money Makes the Mare Go.'	Hoyt's Madison Square Theatre, New York, January 8, 1894.	
A Trip to Chinatown. A Musical Trifle.	Hoyt's Madison Square Theatre, New York, November 9, 1891.	
A Milk White Flag.	Hoyt's Madison Square Theatre, New York, October 8, 1894.	
A Temperance Town.	Hoyt's Madison Square Theatre, New York, September 18, 1894.	
A Contented Woman: A Sketch of the Fair Sex in Politics.	Hoyt's Madison Square Theatre, New York, February, 1897.	
Hoyt.	By Atherton Brownell.	*Bostonian*, 3:386, January, 1896.
Hoyt.	—	*Harper's Weekly*, 44: 1145, December 1, 1900.
Hoyt.	—	*Dramatic Mirror*, December 1, 1900, p. 8.

(in which they only occupy the place of miserable hangers-on) and have made the approach of the interviewer more terrible than the coming of a pestilence.

So contemporaneous were these two dramatists, Harrigan and Hoyt; so dependent were Weber and Fields on the cur-

rent play of their day to burlesque, that the content of their drama — interesting as it is to the student — has little in it for newer generations to ponder, except it be the method, and the strata of humanity dealt with. The American dramatist seems to have dropped these strata unless there be a problem to solve. O'Neill, in "All God's Chillun Got Wings", is the tragic approach toward Harrigan's territory. Kaufman and Connelly, in "Dulcy" and "To the Ladies", suggest a possible Hoyt, far better in technique than he, far less given to fall into the song-and-dance habit. Hoyt punctuated his performances with vaudeville stunts. Now, Harrigan was also a vaudevillian in many ways, but his characters were *genre* portraits. The peculiar type of acting called forth by both playwrights must have been of a vital kind. And both of them wrote the species of play that reached across the footlights and got a spectator under the fifth rib. Even the old newspapers, now that they are read in their mustiness, hold some of the flavor of that laughter. In both the Comic Spirit was always bubbling.

VI

In the street sense, George M. Cohan represents the popular conception of American wit, and his ability should not be overlooked. The colloquial rhythm has always characterized him. His reminiscences, "Twenty Years on Broadway", are full of it, both in the temper of its speech and the "averageness" of its humor. Cohan is an astute genius; he knows the popular mind. He is an acute stage manager; he grasps the essentials of humor and of suspense. He has learned his craft from a hard school of experience. This experience he now takes gayly in his "Twenty Years on Broadway." If Harrigan made the Twelfth Ward famous, "Good-by, Broadway" has made that avenue famous the world around. And the curious thing is that "Broadway Jones" has not created for itself the loyalites that "The Mulligan Guards" did in the eighties. And the excellent "Seven Keys to Baldpate", so deserving of praise as a mystery farce of the suspensive

melodramatic kind, seems to have served its day in 1913–1914, and been put away. But, with all his local appeal, and all his comprehension of the humor that is relished by the *Willies* of New York and the *Aubrey Pipers* of West Philadelphia, I cannot rank Cohan's feel for individual character as high as Harrigan's, nor his humor as native and racy as Ade's or Mr. Dooley's. Yet, as the forerunner of Irving Berlin, as the composer of "Tipperary", as a dramatist of "average" America, he belongs with them all among America's "lively arts." But he does not in any way approach the true humor of George Ade, whose style, even before he became a playwright, was sufficiently conversational in his books to point the way to the stage. That road, however, came into being by the merest chance in 1902.

Ade was born in Kentland, Indiana, on February 9, 1866, his father being a prominent banker of the town. In his youth, the boy tasted of all that country life upon which he was to look back with gentle banter and kindly laughter. In 1887, he graduated from Purdue University, and thereupon began his profession of journalism, which was to lead him to authorship.

By 1890, he was on the Chicago *Daily News*, associating with Harry B. Smith, the librettist of "Robin Hood" and "Rob Roy"; Peter F. Dunne, *alias* "Mr. Dooley"; and Charles B. Dillingham, who, once the personal representative of Miss Julia Marlowe, is now one of the prominent managers of the time. Ade's strides were determined and rapid. In 1894, he became a member of the staff of the Chicago *Record*, remaining there seven years, and occupying the desk made vacant through the death of Eugene Field. His "Artie" book and his "Fables in Slang" were written during these years. In 1900, he sailed for China, Japan, and the Philippines. Thus far the reporter was seeing life in various hues.

Then, on his return, a young Chicago composer, Mr. Wathall, asked Ade to write the "book" for a musical score he was preparing for an amateur club. But the actual work had not progressed far when Henry W. Savage appeared upon the scene, and Ade entered as a factor in the American Drama,

with "The Sultan of Sulu." Then followed in quick succession, "Peggy from Paris", "The County Chairman", "The Sho-Gun", "The College Widow", "The Bad Samaritan", "Just Out of College", and "Father and the Boys."

All of these plays applied poignantly to American conditions of their day; they made use of a fresh way of forcing the incongruous elements of "news" to act themselves visibly before an audience. They were loaded down with a humor which was that of the man on the street — perfectly legitimate humor, even though viewing life from a lower level of values.

Take, for instance, the predominant object of "The Sho-Gun", which was a Korean opera. "It is meant," explained Mr. Ade himself, "to be an indirect treatise on the worship of titles, the formation of trusts, the potency of the American 'pull', Yankee commercial invasion, legal manœuvring, advertising enterprise, and other subjects of timely interest."

The saving grace of our strenuous existence is our appreciation of our own vagaries; that is why Mr. Ade's comic operas were as stimulating as good cartoons. Besides supplying the sinuous lines of color, they had ideas behind the detail. In this respect, Mr. Ade was not so very far removed from W. S. Gilbert, though lacking in facility and in grace. He once defined American Drama as one in which American characters are dealt with "in such manner as to increase our self-respect and to give us a new insight into our characteristics as a people."

Mr. Ade's humor had all the essence of good comedy, but its form was unsteady and was too imitative of the conventional musical comedy and of farce. I do not believe I am far wrong in the contention that our stage has yet to understand the true meaning of comedy, and especially so when it starts out to create comedy in a spirit which is really farce.

However incomplete our discussion, we have at least come to comprehend the justice of accusing our stage of misinterpreting the true, permanent function of comedy. We need a new nomenclature in order to divest the pure type of its confusing deviations. Because we have lost the rich meaning of comedy, we find it difficult, save in "An Enemy of the

People", to understand the Comic Spirit in Ibsen, and it is only by this realization that we will grasp the full significance of Ibsen's optimism. Humor is innate; it is dependent as much upon a quick fancy as upon a quick response to the actual. Though we are not self-conscious, our efforts toward culture ignore the strength that comes from a general understanding of the Comic Spirit. Our American dramatists mostly reflect their humor as an external thing, though there is a difference of excellence between Mark Twain and George Ade; between George Ade and George M. Cohan. Raise the taste for the true Comic Spirit, which saturates humanity first, and creates situation secondarily, and the American dramatist will become more vital in his whole effect. The Comic Spirit exists in our literature, but not so in our drama; because, in bulk, our plays do not stand the test of literature.

And yet, the theatregoer, who thinks at all on these questions as to the essence of drama, will feel that something big should eventually come from American humor on the one hand, and from our national sanity on the other. Certainly, when the accomplishment reaches us, it will be fraught in large measure with the Comic Spirit.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Concerning a Certain Type of Melodrama: the 10. 20. 30.

I

The use of the term *melodrama* has undergone many changes, and it is a question whether at the present moment it is not being subjected to another modification or crucial shifting of the point of view. Such a bastard form of art has it been regarded by the majority of theatregoers that one has lost sight of its origin in the sixteenth century, and of the romantic stock from which it sprang. The term *melodrama* or *melodramatic*, as applied to a play, has always been popularly looked upon as a sign of condemnation, yet, if we consider the essential ingredients for a moment, we will see that the melodrama itself is not the thing to be condemned, but rather the special form in which it was expressed.

The historical side of the subject has received scant attention from the scholar. While in general we are told that Ottavio Rinuccini toward the end of the sixteenth century invented the term *melodrama*, from the Greek words meaning *melody* and *action*, and while we are given to understand that in its application it related entirely to opera — Jean Jaques Rousseau having written his "Pygmalion" for instrumental music — still a scholar has yet to unravel its development from the intricacies of the romantic period, which swept through Italy and France and thence to England. It is hardly conceivable that the music written by Beethoven for "Egmont", or by Massenet for "Phèdre", should be classed

in the same category with "Nellie, the Beautiful Cloak Model" and "Convict 999";[1] yet such is the case, and from such a loose application of the term there has arisen a misunderstanding as to the true elements of melodrama.

Analyzing the relation between music and drama, we note the point from which melodrama might be said to start. Always the highest moments in an opera, the most brilliant moments, are those which involve the characteristic elements of a glaring play. The characters sing longest when they are dying; they boast loudest in the most pronounced arias of the score; their actions are broad and lack subtlety, a subtlety which is dependent more upon the music than upon the play. Possibly it is because the musician has instinctively realized that the moments of greatest music are the moments of greatest human suffering; and undoubtedly the melodramatist of the eighteen-nineties grasped this fact, and worked it for all it was worth. Take away from our operas the orchestration, and the plots will be little more than out and out melodrama.

The student of the theatre will some day, in dealing with melodrama, be forced, therefore, to disentangle its beginnings from the most heightened creations of the romantic period. He will not disdain to connect this *genre* of play writing with that struggle which went on between the classic spirit and the romantic spirit, and which finally resulted in the victory of the latter, when Victor Hugo, in 1830, published "Hernani." It was the same struggle which had commenced in France when the Academicians, Boileau and Charles Perrault, became so deeply involved in a quarrel resulting in petty innuendoes and personal thrusts.

Practically the same result was accomplished in England as Dutton Cook claims was effected in France. For, to quote the latter, "Schlegel, writing early in the century, notes

[1] The methods of advertising melodrama in the days when it flourished at its height on Eighth Avenue, New York, were unique. When "Convict 999" was first produced, three men in stripes, and chained together, tramped the streets of New York. The managers of "Tony, the Bootblack" sent three boys through certain sections of the city, giving free shines to all holders of tickets for "the show."

that dramatic poetry in Paris possessed a certain point of contact with the police, and that the restrictions placed upon the leading theatres banished to the minor stages all new and mixed attempts at histrionic entertainment."

The history of melodrama in England began in 1802, when Holcroft adapted a French manuscript which he called "A Tale of Mystery." And at this early period it is interesting to note the popular conception of the origin of the term *melodrama*, as conceived by the son of Harris, the manager of Covent Garden. He wrote to Frederick Reynolds from Paris regarding the peculiar type of plays which were classed under a name derived from the two words *mêler* and *drame*.[1]

Up to the time of the advent of the Dion Boucicault sensationalism, — for he may be regarded as one of the first to combine the excess of situation with the excess of stage mechanism, — melodrama might be said to have become almost conventional in its adherence to a species of foreign brigand literature. There was not very much desire to accentuate the events of everyday life, but, adhering to the stereotyped romantic passions and situations of the Radcliffe school of novels, the melodramatist of this earlier period wrote more in the tone of the opera librettist than of the dramatist. The history of melodrama in this country, to within recent years, is practically the same as that of England, and the two may be said to have been dependent upon French sources.[2]

[1] Gr. *melos*, song, + drama(t-), < *draō*, perform.

[2] From a French source, the following is quoted: Le poignard, le poison, l'incendie jouaient ou jouent encore le premier rôle dans les mélodrames, avec complications d'enfants volés et retrouvés, machinations ténébreuses d'un traitre, etc. Une des lois du genre était aussi de mêler toujours ou des scènes gaies ou un personnage franchement comique à l'action.

Les auteurs contemporains ont compliqué ces procédés trop simples de l'ancien mélodrame. Ils ont profité des progrès de la mis en scène. Le fond, pourtant, est resté ce qu'il était au temps où la foule se pressait dans les salles de spectacle de l'ancien boulevard du Temple, le fameux "boulevard du crime", comme l'appelait la chronique: à l'étrange, nombreuses sont les pièces anglaises, allemandes, slaves, où la predilection de l'horrible, le retour aux moyens violents des romanciers et dramaturges continuent, sous une etiquette differente, la simple et vieille tradition du mélodrame.

Il y eu des maîtres spéciaux, en cette forme spéciale du théâtre, depuis Guilbert de Pixérécourt, Caignez, Cuvelierde Trye, V. Ducange et Bouchardy, le dernier des

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Poster for Augustin Daly's "Under the Gaslight."

In 1860, America was inundated with a type of "dime novel" story, which spread from ocean to ocean, affecting literature for growing boys, and likewise affording a new impetus to melodrama. For, about this time, David Belasco was enjoying such a glaring piece as "The Idiot Boy of the Rocky Mountains"; and when he reached the East, he found that Augustin Daly had made a success with a melodrama of New York life, entitled "Under the Gaslight." The type of play, like "The Two Orphans", which is in its essentials nothing but a melodrama, could not long survive the reaction which in drama was now to take place. There is no doubt that, even as Pinero and Jones were to break from Robertson and Taylor, and realism was to usurp the boards, so melodrama would likewise be affected by this very realism. The ingredients have always been the same, but the objective point of view was obliged to undergo material alteration with the change of conditions. The melodrama of the eighteen-nineties, which was better named sensational drama, was materially altered by those forces which have been detected behind yellow journalism.

Let us get clearly in mind the characteristics that marked this melodrama. The dominant feature was situation: the broadest results of the very broadest and most elemental emotions. Mr. Walkley once expressed it by saying that there are two sides of a criminal, the outside and the inside, melodrama usually dealing with the former, whereas the novelist would search for the conditions resulting in the existence of the criminal. These two sides in substance marked the distinctive difference between melodrama and fiction.

The old English and French miracle plays had in them all the essentials of this glaring stage type. The manner in which

"ogres romantiques", jusqu'à Anicet-Bourgeois et Dennery. On peut citer les titres souivants: "Victor ou l'Enfant de la forêt" (1798); "Coelina ou l'Enfant du mystère" (1801); "Le Chien de Montargis" (1814); "Fualdès, l'Orpheline de Genève" (1820); "Gaspardo le pêcheur" (1837); "Le Sonneur de Saint-Paul" (1838). . . .

In this class one places "Les Deux Orphelines." An interesting study would be the concentration of melodrama within the realm of the intensely morbid and horrible, as seen in the species of play written for Le Grand Guignol, in Paris.

the miracle of "St. Nicholas and the Thieves" was presented, the careful delineation of *Hellmouth*, with the Devil and his demons rushing up and down the aisles of the church, appealed to the same instincts in the mass of mediæval people, that the broad glorification of good and the meting of punishment did to the people who were fed upon what was called the "Al Woods" type of melodrama. Fitzball, who was considered one of the most productive melodramatists of the early nineteenth century in England, heard Sheridan Knowles exclaim that he considered "Macbeth" one of the finest melodramas he had ever seen; and there is undoubted truth in what he said. Did not Charlotte Cushman say that "Macbeth" was the King of the Bowery boys? Perhaps Knowles asserted this in defence of his own play, "The Hunchback" — which itself belongs to this class of drama. But even at that early day the term had been so misused and the species had so broadened, freed from the narrow restrictions of the patent theatres of London, that Douglas Jerrold, in his report before the Parliamentary Commission of 1832, appointed to examine into the status of the London theatres, inadvertently invented a new term, which is familiar to us to-day as the *legitimate* drama, and which he pitted against this other form. Not only did he deplore the overaccentuation of the physical result to the detriment of the mental cause in melodrama, but Macready likewise regarded the sensational with such disfavor that his contracts stipulated he should be given no part partaking of a melodramatic character.

II

Melodrama, in New York of the eighteen-nineties, which was not only a legitimate type, but also a dominant characteristic of our American life, ran wild. The writer of melodrama misinterpreted his license, and the lovers of the melodramatic were sated with a succession of situations and a minimum of plot. One of the most successful playwrights of this type of piece was Owen Davis, the author of "The Confessions of a Wife", — which was distinctive from his other melo-

dramas by the fact that it called for no "guns", to use a professional term, — "Nellie, the Beautiful Cloak Model" and "Convict 999." He then declared that a certain reaction was about to take place in this indiscriminate use of situation for situation's sake; that his audiences were beginning to see the improbability of so many hairbreadth escapes occurring in the life of any human being within the three hours' traffic of the stage. The public libraries were accused of improving the taste of the public. So that from excess we were forced to return to consistency.

But before then came the unquestioned acceptance of all violences and incongruities. The gallery god ate these plays served hot; he dreamt of the sinuous lady in black standing in the lime-light, he vowed he too would be a detective, trained to be the rescuer of innocent girls thrown overboard from a yacht laden with champagne, or buried alive in some iniquitous opium den. Unlike the b'hoy of the Bowery, who gloried in Forrest's *Spartacus*, or Charlotte Cushman's *Meg Merriles*, the gallery god of Eighth Avenue wanted nothing but the wan innocence of the wronged, and the devilment of the bad to make him forget his daily "trade." From an Al Woods press sheet of 1907, I quote an impression of melodrama from this "god's" viewpoint.

Gee, Cull, [he exclaims] you ain't never seen a drammer? I am telling you, beau, them's the shows that's got these here Mansfield bloats beat a mile. What's dat what you're givin' us? You don't never have no shows in the burg you come from? You pack your duds and trot along wid me and see the real goods. In de first act, de dame in de red dress, that's the willainous, and the guy what she's stuck on, dey plans to put the kibosh on the leadin' lady and her steady. Well, dey trails along most everywhere, and dey kidnaps de goil, and tries to hand her sparring partner de knock-out drops, but it ain't no go, 'cause I'm tellin' ye, pal, when you're on the level, there ain't nobody going to hand you de frozen mit. These here shootin' operas learn you more about this here Sunday School lingos and the square deal stunt, dan all them preachin' gazabos. You take my tip, pal — if you want to learn how to get along and do right, you see dese here drammers.

Thus, in spirit, spoke all the disciples of the Al Woods era of melodrama, which flourished at the American Theatre on Eighth Avenue and at the Thalia Theatre on the Bowery.

Only a hair line separated the emotion of Broadway from that of the Bowery. William Gillette's "Sherlock Holmes" was nothing more than a "thriller", acted with a certain refinement and a certain reserve; which characteristics were usually avoided by the manager of Broadway melodrama. Not only did the sensational play take unto itself a certain formula by which virtue and villainy were expressed, but it likewise required a diction which was excessive in its accentuation.

When all was told, therefore, the difference between the legitimate theatre and melodrama was in this matter of accentuation. Bartley Campbell's "My Partner", Lester Wallack's "Rosedale", "The White Heather", Jones's "The Silver King", "The Ticket-of-Leave Man", C. M. S. McLellan's "Leah Kleschna", and "The Great Ruby" were accounted melodramas of the old school, containing all the distorted actions and passions of the type, but differing from the type, inasmuch as the stories were consistent and the characterizations human. Despite the sensationalism in Dion Boucicault, the genial Irish atmosphere was dominant, and the heart interest was so romantic as to cover the daring ventures with the gloss of possibility. In the eighteen-nineties, however, such writers of melodrama as Owen Davis and Theodore Kremer discarded the intermediate development between the glaring situations, and dealt wholly with the situations themselves, one after the other, irrespective of their possibility in life, and with the sole intention of deadening the logical sense of the spectator with sensationalism.

Mr. Davis, a Harvard graduate, was drawn into writing such plays as "Tony, the Bootblack" and "Nellie, the Beautiful Cloak Model" by his association with "The Great Ruby" company. He thought he could write just as clever a story for the stage, and so he began then and there, acting meanwhile, until he gained a foothold as one of the principal manufacturers of the sensational play. He recognized the

legitimate side of melodrama, he deplored the piling up of catastrophe upon catastrophe, he saw the bathos in the formula which states that the play ends only when every possible calamity has been exhausted. Mr. Davis was what one might call a student of his particular field. He understood his public, which in matter of taste was of the Laura Jean Libbey class. He knew wherein this public was credulous, — the point of appeal in its sentimental make-up. His audiences would not countenance the regeneration of a stage bad man; they must have the victory of virtue and the happy ending; the good must be rewarded suddenly, the bad must be punished lingeringly.

Mr. Davis deserted the realm of the sensational for that of the legitimate just at the time the "Al Woods" type of melodrama was on the wane, just when the melodramatic situation disappeared gradually from the stage, and was squeezed into the nickelodeon slot machine, on its way to a larger development on the moving-picture screen. But in doing so he did not forget the measure of that public to which he once made appeal. In an interview, he at one time epitomized the characteristics of melodrama in this manner:

On Third Avenue the treatment was different. Instead of avoiding the obvious you insisted upon it first, last and all the time. You moved up the ascending scale of emotions with directness. Your hero was labeled at his first entrance. Nothing was left to inference. It was almost indispensable that he knock down the villain in the first two minutes following his entrance. In the same easy way your comedian had to get a laugh as he came on. Instead of having your heroine pursued by some abstract thing such as fate, you had her pursued by a tangible villain bent upon cutting her throat. You piled catastrophe upon catastrophe. By the time the hero threw his protecting arms around her in the last act, she must have narrowly escaped scalping by Indians, been almost drowned in a mill-race, missed death in a train wreck, and been shot at and stabbed by the villain, to say nothing of having passed unscathed through several conflagrations, an earthquake or two, a mine cave-in, or a magazine explosion. The play only ended when you had exhausted every possible

calamity, but it ended happily: it *had* to end happily. And the hero remained the hero, and the villain died as black as when he first came on. I know, because I tried. The public had no faith in the regeneration of the stage bad man. He was there as the symbol of everything that was bad, and by the fourth act he had committed every crime possible. The audience did not want him to repent and get away free. He had to be killed lingeringly, if possible. Right must triumph and wrong must be punished. That was one of the fundamental principles of the so-called cheap drama.

In that particular the cheap drama was a power for good and a moralizing force of no little value. Our heroics were mock heroics, perhaps, but they had a salutary effect nevertheless. The lowly laborer who lived a life of squalor in the back room of a tenement, when he heard the hero declare that he would rather die than steal, might come to think that, after all, this was the sort of morality that suited him too.

Speaking only of my own plays, I dare say that I addressed each season an audience numbering upward of seven million people. I had eighteen plays on the road at a time, and about ninety in stock. In every one of my pieces there was some wholesome truth, some good moral precept advanced, and yet almost invariably the attitude maintained by the press toward these plays was one of gentle derision. Serious criticism of them was never attempted. The one reason why newspaper men were sent to cover them was to poke fun at them the next day. They furnished the basis for funny stories, nothing else. Personally, I couldn't see any fairness in this. Certain papers made special effort to catch the proletariat by writing down their editorials to the mental level and understanding of the illiterate, prosaic, unlettered, uncultured classes, and then turned right about to another column and assumed the superior and high-art tone in discussing the plays which these same people went to see.

Mr. Davis in those days declared that his particular type of audience never took things for granted. You had to emphasize for them that a certain event was going to happen, that it was happening, and that it had happened; three times each point had to be driven home. Humanity being the keynote,

the ten- and twenty- and thirty-cent theatregoer had to have action laid on in large sweeps. The emotions were not subtle; they ascended toward the climax, not in flowing consistency, but with intermittent thumps. The formula exacted that the heroine must be as young and fresh after twenty hairbreadth escapes as though she were attending a garden party. Yet, from the technical side, Mr. Davis's ingenuity was effective. He wrote the dialogue for and planned the staging of "The Siege of Port Arthur" for the Hippodrome, and certain striking elements therein he transferred to his own melodrama, "Convict 999."[1] He wrote so many melodramas of the conventional type, he studied the situation so thoroughly, that he was able to tell exactly in what direction the next change in the tastes of his audiences would "jump." Although his "Gambler of the West", his "Broadway after Dark", his "Chinatown Charlie", and his "Creole Slave's Revenge" were sure of a hearing from his particular following, he recognized that this following was becoming sated, that their acceptance was being turned into incredulity, that they were being educated away from the old order and nearer the legitimate realm of melodrama.

In this respect, it may be noted that A. H. Woods, at the time one of the largest managers of melodrama in America, was himself being involved in this change. For, while he was the means of encouraging the thriller, he likewise, as a manager, was being drawn nearer to the legitimate drama; and a reaction soon occurred in his own attitude toward this particular theatre which made him a fortune. The countless writers upon whom he depended for his yearly supply of melodramas, like Davis and Kremer and John Oliver, in the early days, would have been turned down flat had they suggested using any semblance of subtlety of emotion, any apparent consistency, any logical cause and effect. But, as melodrama began to wane, Al Woods became critical of the sensationalism he had nurtured. He deserted melodrama for the legitimate by way

[1] Other melodramas by Mr. Davis were: "On Trial for his Life", "The Crooked Path", "The Prince of Spendthrifts", "The Millionaire and the Circus Rider", "Jack Sheppard, the Bandit King", and "The King and Queen of Gamblers."

of "The Girl and the Taxi", wherein "sex" was flaunted in a way that would have put melodrama to the blush. One of the surprising things was that when Mr. Davis finally deserted the melodrama of Eighth Avenue, he proceeded to forget it. One would have thought his sense of proportion would have been dulled, if not wholly destroyed. A strange contrast, "Nellie, the Beautiful Cloak Model", with "The Detour" and "Ice-bound."

III

Theodore Kremer likewise showed the same dissatisfaction over being forced to produce such dramas as "Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl", "Fast Life in New York", "The Fatal Wedding", and "The King of Bigamists." He outlined the melodramatic formula in this way:

My audiences are all from Missouri: they want to be shown: unless you show them first they will not believe. In the play now being acted by Miss Ethel Barrymore ["Her Sister"], it is made clear during the conversation that the fortune-teller and the young man to whom she is engaged first met in a train. Now it is all right for the Broadway audiences to hear that the two met in a train, but the Eighth Avenue audiences have to be shown the train and the meeting. Instead of beginning the acquaintance by having him hand her a paper, he would — to please my theatregoers — have to fling the paper in her face. She would be insulted and address him, 'Sir!' Then he would apologize, the acquaintance would begin, and it could then ripen into love, but not before. And in the first act of the play the fortune-teller would have to be shot on to the stage out of a trap-door.

Mr. Kremer was once regarded as the Clyde Fitch of melodrama, even as Owen Davis usurped the title of Augustus Thomas; and should one examine the early manuscripts of each, this distinction might be readily seen, for Mr. Davis's sensationalism was fraught with the vigor of the masculine, whereas Mr. Kremer usually dealt with the feminine.[1] Yet

[1] Other writers of melodrama were John Oliver, Hal Reid, Lem B. Parker, William L. Roberts, Joseph B. Totten, Joseph Le Brandt, and Langdon McCormack. Al Woods was the typical producer of melodramas; there were others.

despite this sex viewpoint, their plays were worked absolutely upon the same lines; their heroes, their heroines, their villains, their inconsistencies, their colloquial humor, their virtues, which obtruded to such a degree as to lack virtue, their seriousness which was so pronounced as to be humorous, were all of the same color. They wrote their plays according to a formula decided upon between themselves and their manager. The billboard posters were drawn a long while before pen was even put to paper. The trap-doors, the bridges which were to be blown up, the walls which were to be scaled, the instruments of torture for the persecuted heroines, the freight elevators which were to crush out the lives of deserving characters, the elevated trains which were to rush upon the prostrate forms of gagged and insensible girls, — all these melodramatic accessories were determined upon before the manuscript took definite shape. In fact, there was little shaping done after the situations were decided upon. The only thing left for the dramatist was to fill up the gaps with conversations which led, however irrelevantly, to the situations themselves. Herein were to be found those elements of melodrama which were finally the cause of its own undoing. For the masses were gradually becoming better educated, were — because of the general interest in drama — coming under influences which raised their standards of living and softened their ideals. One cannot fool the public all the time at the theatre, even though it be on Eighth Avenue or on the Bowery.

It is hard to analyze any of the plays representing this peculiar type. The newspaper accidents, murders, intrigues, the electrical and mechanical marvels of the age, were all used. I note the following bit of "news" sent out to the papers in those days. It said:

"Captain Kelly, whose Zouaves are to be a feature of 'Convict 999', will introduce into that play a novel wall-scaling effect. The scaling of one wall by a body of men has become quite common. This season, however, there are three walls representing the enclosure of a prison, and the Captain's men will be compelled to mount each of them in rapid succession."

One looked for a succession of such stunts in Al Woods's melodramas. There was the conventional drunkard who maltreated the conventional cripple; there was the one character from whom all humor flowed, a convention which marked the Yiddish stage as well. The hero, in the course of his progress along the path of love, disguised himself a thousand and one times; and the grand *finale* usually came with the arrival of a man-of-war, or the rushing on of soldiers. You cannot outline the plot; you can only enumerate the situations. In Davis's "A Marked Woman", the *S. S. Alabama* and the American Consulate were among its nine scenes, and supposed Chinese "devils" threw off their dresses, beneath which were uniforms of U. S. soldiers. The spotlight rested on the flag, and the orchestra played "The Star-spangled Banner." In "The Queen of the White Slaves", told in fifteen scenes, the *Indiana* arrived in the nick of time.

The dialogue of these melodramas of the Al Woods era was not much different in sentiment, in display of manly character and womanly virtue, from the many early romantic plays we have already referred to. The dramas of the eighteen-thirties and forties were equally as full of incongruities; their plot sequences were just as violent and rapid in change; their use of humor and the confining of humor to particular moments and particular characters were just as conventional and "set." Melodrama underlies a great part of our theatre entertainment.

The plays that Al Woods used to present may be covered with dust. I have not seen them in print, save typed copies. But they sound, in their manner and their sentiment, if not in the violence of their accentuation, much like the older plays I have read in print. An American girl is in the power of the Chinese: one *Prince Tuan* would have her for his wife. The *Dowager Empress* rubs it in. *Lucille*, who happens to be a daughter of the American consul, is equal to the occasion. She says to the *Prince:*

When the time comes that our lives are in danger here in China we will not look to your friendship for safety, but to the guns of the American battleships.

And later, to the *Empress* she turns:

> His wife. . . . Honor to be his wife! Honor! It would be a shame so much greater than death, that I would welcome death before I would live one hour in his presence. . . . Women of my country are not slaves; you may have the power to keep me prisoner here, but my life is mine, and I will end it before he puts one hand upon me.

Such is the rhythm of a special type of melodrama.

It is said that yellow journalism is dependent not so much upon the manner in which a leading article is written, as on the style in which the type is set and the manner in which the pictures are drawn.

This perhaps might likewise be claimed for melodrama. Its differences are a matter of emphasis. Once win a bad name, and it is hard to escape it. In Mr. Belasco's "The Girl of the Golden West", the wounded hero is hidden by the girl from the pursuing *Sheriff*, and from where he lies above the rafters of the room, blood drips upon the floor beneath. Had Mr. Kremer been the author of this piece, one would have smiled at it. But the two-dollar audiences accepted it because it was Mr. Belasco. However, the difference between "The Girl of the Golden West", softened by some attempt at subdued acting, and "The Girl of the Golden West" as it might have been given on the Bowery or Eighth Avenue, would lie wholly in accentuation.

IV

Did this melodrama, which we have termed the Al Woods type, disappear, or was it transferred to some other form of art? For the melodrama which we have analyzed as descending from French models is still existent on the stage. The violent scene, which characterized "Chinatown Charlie" and "Convict 999" and "The Queen of the Opium Den", found a ready outlet in the moving pictures which began to develop just when melodrama began to wane on Eighth Avenue. It has flourished on the screen because one of its chief

characteristics was a dependence on variety of background, quick shifting from one place to another, water and land effects, three-dimensional situations which called into play all the athletic powers of the players. These demands could be met and even amplified on the screen.

But the day of rash incongruity was over with the writers of this type of play. Realism taught them that a consistency must be adhered to; the screen, aiming for a certain continuity of plot, discarded the impossible, except where avowedly the camera was tricked for the purpose of creating startling results. The perspective of plays was panoramic, not confined to fifteen crudely painted scenes, but with the whole country as a background. The camera could be taken to the four corners of the globe with a company of actors. Every mechanical facility could be called into play as accessory: railway systems, steamship companies, private houses, palaces, governmental equipments could be used. The streets of Paris and London, the highest peaks of the Andes, the wastes of Sahara, were there for the asking. In this respect the limitless possibilities of background are at the command of the camera. So, the old melodrama has prospered, though its relation is nearer fiction than drama.

In fact, if I do not discuss the technique of the moving picture in this survey, it is because I believe its dramatic content is more nearly the externalizing of a dramatic story than the mounting of a play. For it is difficult to recognize the neat structure of a play in a three- or five-reel moving picture; the narrative is expanded into a series of dramatic incidents made active: the eye is able, because of what is actually seen, to supply the interstices of descriptive matter. The more one analyzes the moving picture the more nearly does it approach fiction than drama.

Of course the story is told by means of actors: they appear in successive illustrations — pictures — whose continuity reveals the progress of a plot. There is a technique in this which differs both from the art of fiction and the art of drama. The ease with which the screen may take from both the stage and the book shows that it is a law unto itself: that what it is after

is a story to picture forth in a series of scenes and actions. While there is a selective process, the means of selection are almost as expansive as the novelist's. There is none of the dramatist's compression, suggestion, adherence to laws of time, place, or manner. The screen writer, like the story writer, may overleap many chasms by a cut-back or a close-up, or a succession of coincident occurrences. This is more nearly the novelist's power.

The history of the moving picture — how it took over the old melodrama, how it claimed actors and managers who were at first antagonistic toward it, how it tempted the playwright to cut his dramatic cloth for the sake of the screen, how it prompted most of the novelists to write their stories with an eye to the screen, — is a story which needs to be told but which should not detain our survey. Sometimes, to the credit of the studio, let it be said, the camera has justified itself, — the camera together with a director of imagination. The beauty of Barrie's "Peter Pan", the adequacy of treatment accorded Joseph Hergesheimer's "Java Head", the improvement of "The Great Divide" over the inconsistences of the Moody drama on the stage, the imaginative scope of Douglas Fairbank's "The Thief of Bagdad", are to its credit. In its wide appeal, over an area not touched by the regular theatre, its influence is enormous. But at basis there should be no conflict between the theatre and the moving picture. The screen has its limitation; the human quality is wanting, its spiritual content is confined to a small range, because it is after all a pictorial art. But these pictures may be made more artistic, the technique of telling a story may be made more effective, the acting may, with the improvement of the camera, be recorded more perfectly, and the actor may develop a mimetic power which at present he has only to a small degree. Yet even then, the theatre is of a different realm, because on the stage the presence of the actor is demanded, and personality is warm because of that presence.

The moving picture is a temptation to the playwright and the novelist; but, if both are artists in their craft, they need not be limited by the demands of the moving picture. They

stand just as much chance of striking success on the screen by keeping their own particular art to its highest point of effectiveness. Yet, I have detected in much of our drama and fiction a tendency to keep an eye on pictorial effect: as though the writer had said to himself, "I will make my story melodramatic, that it may more easily find its way upon the screen." And many dramatists have gone to Hollywood to turn to immediate account a technical ability which has not found immediate acceptance on the stage. Thus the theatre lost Thompson Buchanan, Charles Kenyon, A. E. Thomas, and others who should have done much for native dramatic authorship.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Concerning Clyde Fitch and the Local Sense

I

Clyde Fitch wrote for the theatre of his day. He came under the persuasive personality of Charles Frohman, who seems to have had a charm, an irresistibility about him, which none could withstand. The whole record of the Little Napoleon of the Theatre consists in loyalties to and from his actors and dramatists. They loved him; he watched after their interests, and nothing was too great a task for him, when he wanted to bring some one to success. He interpreted the theatre in his own way; and this interpretation became at once the standard and the limitation of all American theatrical managers of the time. For Frohman was a leader, against whom it was difficult to compete.

I find a confession in Barrie's charming foreword to the Frohman "Life." He said: "I had only one quarrel with him, but it lasted all the sixteen years I knew him. He wanted me to be a playwright and I wanted to be a novelist. All those years I fought him on that. He always won, but not because of his doggedness; only because he was so lovable that one had to do as he wanted." The statement here given is worthy of consideration as showing the impelling power of the American manager through something in him that was greater than his intellectual breadth.

In a period when the American Drama was possibly at its lowest ebb, Charles and Daniel Frohman occupied commanding, almost dictatorial positions. In their enthusiasm for the

English play of the period, they unconsciously helped to keep the American Drama at its low point, though Daniel did now and again produce a native comedy at his memorable Lyceum Theatre. I do not wish in any way to detract from my realization of the intrinsic worth of these two men of the theatre: the quality of the acting they fostered was good, with a reminiscent dexterity of the old-time stock; but their growing belief in the "star" system had a disastrous effect on the plays of the period, and, in the case of Clyde Fitch, served to limit his invention and to direct his construction. He thought too persistently in terms of "stars." The business character of organization encouraged a business attitude toward the plays produced, and the conditions under which they were produced. The speculative phase of any theatrical undertaking made it necessary to use means outside the play itself to insure success, or at least to decrease loss to a minimum.

Not that Charles Frohman was commercial; he died poor, and everything he earned went back into the theatre which gave it to him. He was a child in the pleasure he took in theatre management. But, in order to play, he must have money to play with, and so he trimmed his sails to the box-office gale; public approval was the wind by which he steered. If he foundered, he took to another vessel and did not bemoan his loss, except in so far as it might limit his plans for further adventure. Hence this policy of his ruled him, shaped his belief in the theatre. He gave the public what they wanted, and what they wanted, so he argued in the main, was what they, in the largest numbers, would buy. It would not be just to say that he did not take under his management anything that was not so judged. I doubt whether "Everyman" or his London Repertory venture were regarded as "safe" enterprises. He did them because he wanted to, because there was something about this little man that brought strange loves to his heart, stranger dreams to his head.

In the Frohman "Life", the authors have gathered some excerpts from his varied correspondence, as showing his wit, as revealing his solicitude and interest, as indicating his perspicacity. These quotations do more than that. They sug-

gest the limitations of the American Theatre of the eighteen-nineties, due to the criteria of one man in the theatre, who was followed almost blindly, always devotedly.

At random, let us note the earmarks of the time. These managers were after plays that "got" their audiences through novelty, through "clean" character; the entertainment must be wholesome and with big human scenes; it must last an evening to full measure. The "real thing" was a changeable product. To Alfred Sutro, Frohman confessed as much: "These American plays with thieves, burglars, detectives, and pistols seem to be the real things over here just now. None of them has failed." But what does he write the same author later? "I do believe that throughout the United States a play really requires a star artist, man or woman — woman for choice . . ." A good theatrical play to him was a good play. He writes to another: "When one talks to an English author about 'Diplomacy', he says, 'Oh, that's a theatrical play!' I wish I could get another like it." In 1913, he wrote: "At present the taste is 'down with light plays, down with literary plays.' They want plays with dramatic situations, intrigue, sex conflict. There is no use giving the public what it does not want and what they ought to have."

Thus Frohman only looked for the limited use of the playwright. There was a pattern to follow; when it was outworn and new fashions were being bought, then Frohman was looking for the "fad." He was a naïve showman, upright, honest to the point of giving himself and his era away completely. The unfortunate thing is that he lost quite as much by his "safe" policy as he would have done by an experimental one. He was conservative, and so the theatre he directed had to be conservative. He was in control of the market and so was in position to impose his limitations upon others, since an author always seeks production. He once made a proposal to Fitch — generous in its financial scope — but corralling the dramatist's "futures." "As Frohman has nearly *all* the theatres, and *nearly* all the actors, why not?" asks the dramatist. Subtlety of personality and dominance of business control: this is the Charles Frohman, who "never broke his word" — an

interesting study, a man whom Elia, so Barrie asserts, would have relished picturing in words; a man whom Barrie always found so gentle and yet so roughly educated.

II

This point of view of the possible influence of Charles Frohman on Clyde Fitch I have suggested in an introduction to his play, "The City." I have done so with no intention of claiming that Fitch himself did not have limitations as a playwright, but rather to show one of the forces that kept his dramas representative of his time. They were more than representative; they constituted the high watermark of dramatic endeavor in the American Theatre, so deluged with amateurishness and imitation. At the time of Fitch's death, the Boston *Transcript*, writing editorially, had this to say:

In Mr. Fitch's earlier days managers, actors, and even audiences mistrusted the ability of American playwrights and the interest of plays of American life. Most of all they were suspicious of the comedy of American manners and incidents of the hour. It was such pieces that Mr. Fitch wished to write, that he wrote best, and he had almost single-handed to prove by his own skill and example that they could be written interestingly, amusingly, even significantly; that players of reputation could venture themselves safely in them; that a secure public would quickly recognize and like them. The comedy of American manners was indeed neglected, frail and struggling when Mr. Fitch began to write. He has left it firm in its place on the stage, assured of an intelligent public, a significant, capable and promising part of our rising drama. He died almost young; but with the comedy of American manners he was already an example and incentive to a new generation.

This, to my mind, was the positive contribution that Clyde Fitch made, entitling him to serious consideration. A little more than fifteen years after his death, I assisted in editing his "Letters", a sheaf of correspondence revealing a personality vital and attractive; showing all his nervous quality, the rapidity of his workmanship, the sapping strain of the theatre

upon him, his great demand. The letters, I believe, did what they were intended to do: they pictured a lovable man, generous in his responses, decorative in his tastes, keenly alive to beauty, quickly responsive to environment, loyal and asking for loyalty. The book did not reveal much of his intellectual sensitiveness because it consisted mostly of notes quick upon the moment of events; that side of Fitch needed to be caught by a Boswell, as Professor William Lyon Phelps has pointed out. "Clyde Fitch was one of the most brilliant talkers I ever knew," he wrote. "His conversation was filled with shrewd observations, penetrating criticisms, and sparkled with wit and humor. His marvellous flow of good talk seemed to come in an effortless manner from an inexhaustible source." Unfortunate indeed that the playwright did not put on paper more of what he thought about the theatre and his craft; for he thought constantly of both.

But he was a man of his time and a playwright of the theatre of his time; he played the game to the fullest bent of his powers, and he brought to the playhouse much grace, much wit, much variety, with now and again depth of characterization unusual in the days of our "hardened" theatre, as he once called it. It was a conventional theatre with conventional rules for success; and Fitch played these rules, since there was no other way for an American dramatist to do. He played them with skill, adroitness, and honesty, and they brought him much in the way of the world's goods. This did not turn his head; he was always simple (however decorative), never conceited and overconfident, always strenuous, ever desiring that calm and peace out of which come deep conviction and sound reasoning. His personality caught the surface, but in the glimpse he always went beneath. Mr. Robert Herrick marvelled at the sufficiency of Fitch's "first glance." "It was not merely for rest and recuperation that he went so often to Europe," writes the novelist; "it was for the unconscious exhilaration to his mind that he felt while there, dashing from country to country, from gallery and *Antichita* to church and view. Italy especially drew him. There was something colorful and expressive in his nature,

quite un-American, that demanded the warmth and spontaneity of Italy for its satisfaction. Fitch could speak little Italian, and never stayed long in any one place, but he knew Italy in a swift, unerring, instinctive way."

Fitch's plays are growing into disuse; their contemporaneousness is their undoing; their manners are thin, their intellectual content is also thin. His realism was never deep, like Herne's, his conviction never as strong as it was in his daily intercourse with friends. Not believing in what he feared might be preachment, he often committed the error of getting what he had to say done in a speech or two, and devoting the rest of his play to familiar foibles. Yet he did all this with deftness, with enthusiasm, with speed. He spared no effort to improve himself in his technique: each play absorbed him, even though at times the weariness of adaptation appalled his spirit and brought him discouragement. He wanted every one to believe him earnest, and a large part of his sensitiveness to criticism was due to the fact that the newspaper writers never would believe him either sincere or earnest. They always slurred him in ways that hurt. He once wrote to me about his successes abroad, where they accepted him for his truth and his technique, — so different from the usual way in which he was treated at home. "How do you account for this?" he asked. "Isn't it that unconsciously we are all more or less influenced by our environment, and the environment about the criticism of my work, or those who don't know me, is still the echo of fifteen years ago, when I was said to be superficial, writing too fast, etc., etc., an attitude at first struck by the press, because they didn't like the cut of my coat, nor my sensitive shyness which looked like a lack of good-fellowship, or conceit?!"

These foibles became a tradition; and they have persisted among critics who did not know him. To them Fitch was a gaily apparelled person, surrounded by an infinite number of gold-laced lackeys. They thought he never had any consideration of man and his destiny, but only cared for gentlemen's waistcoats and ladies' lipsticks. They avoided considering his "The Truth", and overemphasized the steam-radiator

familiarity of "Girls." He wrote many comedies of seemingly light texture, yet Howells saw in one of them, "Glad Of It", a technique, a truthful observation which brought forth his saying so in print, and Fitch's grateful acknowledgment. To which Howells replied, "The more I thought of that gay, brilliant, honest, living play of yours, the more I have liked it, and the more I have deplored its removal from the theatre. I do not think it was built on the great lines, and that its astonishing inconclusiveness was not greater proof of your grasp than its easy and natural successiveness was of your knowledge of how and when to let things go of themselves." Such workmanship represented Fitch's own quality — a literary quality — and his contribution to the theatre of his day.

That was a distinctive contribution when one reviews what the other contemporary native dramas were. If this ability had been subject to a different theatrical condition, in some ways Fitch would have himself been different. It is true Shaw and Ibsen were both bringing to the English theatre — and its colonial dependent of the time, America — a body of thought, of social criticism, of individual psychology. Ibsen had blazed his way on the Continent, and was not dependent on Anglo-Saxon acceptance: as it is he had a hard struggle to win out in London and in New York, as far as the regular theatre was concerned. Shaw met with equal opposition. In no sense was Fitch a militant. No dramatist in the American Theatre thought of being one. Pinero and Jones were fighting for the freedom of the English stage, and the latter had done much with his book, "The Renascence of the English Stage." But, granted that there was a narrow parochialism in the theatre — which would have barred Eugene O'Neill and a revival of the Restoration Drama, both of which we accept to-day: there was no place for vigorous ideas, there was little outlet for classic drama or acting of the quality soon to pass away with Henry Irving and Richard Mansfield. How Fitch felt about it, how circumscribed he was, is clearly seen in a letter to Miss Marguerite Merington, from Lucerne, dated July 25, 1897, about a play just sent to Charles Frohman. He wrote:

O! M. M., fellow scribe and fellow sufferer, what a state it is, when there is only *one man* to whom one can offer a play and expect to have it in any ½ adequate way presented — I mean of course a *play*, not a *star's* piece. I tell you there will never be *good* American dramatists till there are good American producers! And without these last mentioned gentlemen the good American dramatists that there are — YOU and ME, *par example*, cannot begin to do ourselves justice.

Miss Merington was author of "Captain Letterblair", in which E. H. Sothern had appeared at the outset of his career.

III

Fitch had about him certain qualities of the novelist. In that respect he was not unlike Pinero, though the latter was sounder in his invention, much more solid in his plot construction. The man who has the ability to tell a story, and to tell it in an easy, interesting manner, possesses the art of the narrator. But if, in addition, he sees the story in action, he is somehow forced to tell it in accordance with the form action demands. In other words, whenever a novelist introduces into his story an active interchange of personality with personality, he is compelled to use the very form that distinguishes drama: dialogue. The playwright translates life wholly in terms of action, in terms of speech, in terms of situation. His fundamental idea must invariably rely for understanding on the effects of that idea upon the characters of his play, and every step in the development of his story must be advanced by this means, — and this alone. Strange that dialogue by itself does not make drama; many novelists, turned playwrights, have found to their destruction that this is so; many adapters, changing novels into plays for the stage, have discovered that the scissors and paste, however dexterously used, did not take from the narrative any embedded drama. The essential structure of each is different. And because the instinct of the dramatist was uppermost both in Pinero and Fitch, they were both dramatists rather than novelists.

In the case of Clyde Fitch, that instinct became a dangerous asset. He was endowed with a prolific inventive talent, and this he worked rapidly. He couldn't help it. His pen, as sketchy as a painter's brush, caught the passing show, and the form his impressions took was drama. From his early Amherst days he was writing.

Fitch was a realist, if by realism we mean the handling of everyday occurrences and of the familiar natural problems of existence; but his realistic data was usually subjected to a high light of what at one moment was romanticism and at another moment sentimentalism. Much as quite a few of his plays have been discussed from the standpoint of their feminine suggestiveness and from the standpoint of their feminine sensuous interests, in point of morality Fitch was wholly conventional. His cleverness in overcoming this conventional tendency rested on his theatrical employment of the *unusual*. In other words, in point of visual sense, Fitch's observation of little things was about as sane as that of any other living dramatist of his time, his fault being that he failed to bring his minute observation into relation with any large, vital, or sustained idea.

In 1897, Fitch published a little volume, entitled "The Smart Set: Correspondence & Conversations." It is another example of the insistent dramatist who dominates above the story-teller in the writing of a book. It contained the attitude of the dialogue, and so we may claim that Fitch was a born playwright, in the double sense that in expressing himself he perforce had to use dialogue, and in viewing life he invariably felt compelled to estimate it in terms of situation. His undoing was that he lacked the consuming idea.

As far as dramatic faith is concerned, Fitch was thoroughly sincere. He lived up to his convictions as to what drama should be in general, and he expressed his convictions in the following terms:

I feel myself very strongly the particular value — a value which, rightly or wrongly, I can't help feeling inestimable — in a modern play, of reflecting absolutely and truthfully the life and environment about us; every class, every kind, every

emotion, every motive, every occupation, every business, every idleness! Never was life so varied, so complex. . . . Take what strikes you most, in the hope it will interest others, take what suits you most to do — what perhaps you can do best, and then do it better. Be truthful, and then nothing can be too big, nothing should be too small, so long as it is here and there. . . . If you inculcate an idea in your play, so much the better for your play and for you and for your audience. In fact, there is small hope for your play as a play, if you have not some idea in it, somewhere and somehow, even if it is hidden. It is sometimes better for you if it is hidden, but it must of course be integral. . . . One should write what one sees, but observe under the surface. It is a mistake to look at the reflection of the sky in the water of theatrical convention; instead, look up and into the sky of real life itself.

This quotation contains the essence of Fitch's attitude toward life. It shows him prone to place idea throughout his work in a secondary position, and he thus unconsciously became a very true critic of himself. For he was given to infuse into his picturesque entertainments some small semblance of ideas, which, while not seemingly vital, were so commonplace as to have intimate connection with the human side of his audiences. "The Climbers", "The Girl with the Green Eyes", "The Girl and the Judge", "Her Own Way", — each of these contains an element of *live* meaning, apart from the mere interest of story or attractiveness of scene; and this very presence of a suggestion of the vital spark in drama is what made one most regretful regarding Fitch as a dramatist. For he had that within him out of which the highest dramatic literature might have been evolved.

The general impression was that he did not make good, for the very reason that his ideas never seemed to arrive. That he was consciously aware of foreign drama was indicated by the way he welcomed in it just those large and significant characteristics which, had he possessed them, would have placed him in the front ranks of the progressive dramatic movement. He once said: "No one at the present moment is getting the essence of his environment in thought, word, and

deed, as Hervieu, Lavedan, Donnay, Capus: Capus with the idea for the basic principle, the idea serious; Lavedan and Donnay, the idea social; Capus all sorts of ideas together, any old idea so long as it is always life — especially the life superficial, with the undercurrent really kept under."

Our American dramatist has, during the past two decades, developed within himself a sense of *locality*. This is very natural, considering his keenness of observation. But he has not yet sufficiently balanced this observation with an intellectual understanding of those characteristics which go to make the nation. We could more readily describe Fitch by saying that he was a typical New York dramatist, than a typical American dramatist; for the conventions running through his plays are those of a society which was common to New York City in the eighteen-nineties. Even in his scenic indications, he preferred to appeal to the local sense of New Yorkers. His "Major André", played at the Savoy Theatre, was supposed to have taken place in an old colonial residence, situated exactly on the spot occupied by the Savoy Theatre itself. His "Glad of It" had one act behind the scenes of the Savoy Theatre. His "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines" opened on the docks of the Cunard Steamship Company. The last two acts of "The Truth" were laid in a Harlem flat. "Girls" was filled with allusions to apartment life in New York, which only New Yorkers could fully appreciate.

This local sense was encouraged in those dramatists who had gained experience through newspaper reporting. Mr. Thomas once confessed that, when he began to write for the stage, he mentally divided the country into various sections for his own purposes. He did this by centering his attention upon the social position women occupied in the North, South, East, and West, and he stated his case thus: "In the South the unwritten law and the spotlessness of a woman's reputation are the first items, as they are the last. In the middle West they are not so punctilious; and in the far West, where the scarcity of the article raises its price, a woman's position is not prohibitive, if, after accepting a man's name and his protection, she runs straight and is true. In the North we

have commenced to accept the English idea of compensation and consideration for services to the husband where a wife has been seduced." Whether Mr. Thomas actually did regard the country from this standpoint must be proven by careful examination of his plays, but we believe that this statement of his is more closely applicable to Fitch's own consideration of the sex problem. His plays were avowedly romantic, their psychology mostly commonplace and healthy. It was distinctively the psychology of the story-teller, and in instances was not only cleverly, but realistically portrayed. For example, "The Girl with the Green Eyes" is a close, persistent analysis of jealousy.

Fitch attempted nearly every form of drama. His character studies, as typified by "Beau Brummel", — written in conjunction with Richard Mansfield — "Frédéric Lemaître", and "His Grace de Grammont", reveal a delicacy and deftness which, although lacking in virility, constitute, none the less, miniatures of a notable order. He attempted war drama in his "Nathan Hale" and "Barbara Frietchie", but they may be described as war dramas with the war left out. He wrote straight comedies as well as farces; and, in the realm of melodrama, such a piece as "The Woman in the Case" might be taken as a typical and striking example.

The interest of Fitch usually centred upon the feminine side of his play. No writer for the stage had a keener sense of changing styles and foibles than he. Oftentimes his weakness lay in his too great dependence upon novelty or familiarity of detail. He wrote so many pieces with these characteristics uppermost, that we were never startled by Fitch's inventive powers. In a new drama by him, we were almost sure of finding certain familiar features which belonged to no one else but him. Our curiosity was piqued, and so distinctly did we imagine that we knew the flavor of the Fitch atmosphere, that, unless he gave us the flavor we were expecting, we left the theatre disappointed. We can say of "The Climbers", for example, that, through the customary method Fitch employed, his public was willing to find amusement in the first act of a play which opened in a house of mourning a short

Collection Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

FAY DAVIS AND CLYDE FITCH AT REHEARSALS OF MRS. EDITH WHARTON'S "THE HOUSE OF MIRTH."

Collection Albert Davis, Brooklyn, N. Y.

JOHN MASON AND AUGUSTUS THOMAS

Mr. Mason appeared in Thomas's psychic dramas.

while after the burial service had been held. In "The Stubbornness of Geraldine", the clever representing of the deck of one of our large ocean liners was legitimately entertaining, even though an accessory.

But the Fitch flavor, which was so familiar to theatregoers, and which might almost be said to have become crystallized, created in the forty or fifty plays which are to his credit a level of cleverness above which very few of the pieces stand out. Nearly all of his plays bore a close relationship, one with the other. His heroines were mostly of the same romantic type, his heroes had the same polished daring. It is a mistaken idea that there are but few ways in drama of creating humor. We may no doubt reduce an analysis of humor to a certain number of elements, but the combinations of those elements are infinite. The fault with Fitch's humor rested in the fact that he was prone to use the same combinations over and over again. I would say of him that his grasp of the life and manners of New York, from earliest times, was more intimate than that possessed by any other dramatist or writer of his day. Because of this grasp, he was able to play with details, to contrast the past with the present, to create his humor by means of this balance of the past with the present. Take, for example, "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines." The references to Hoboken made by *Madame Trentoni* are put from the standpoint of those early times, rather than from the standpoint of to-day. Should one read the diaries of Tyrone Power, the grandfather of the present actor of that name, one would find the same characteristic innuendoes that sound humorous to us to-day, simply because they — while not wholly true of the Hoboken of the present — have, nevertheless, an element of truth in them. They persist, as tradition is prone to exist.

Fitch created humor, likewise, by a method of comparing material advance. When *Madame Trentoni* comes down the gangplank and meets the New York newspaper reporters, she is enthusiastic about the quickness of the trip over — something like fourteen days — and the reporters boast that in time to come they will even be able to make it in ten days.

CLYDE FITCH (1865–1909)

For complete list of plays see "Clyde Fitch and His Letters"; also Moses' "Representative Plays", Vol. III.

Beau Brummel.	Madison Square Theatre, New York, May 17, 1890.	
Nathan Hale.	Knickerbocker Theatre, New York, January 2, 1899.	
Barbara Frietchie.	Criterion Theatre, New York, October 24, 1899.	
The Climbers.	Bijou Theatre, New York, January 21, 1901.	
Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines.	Garrick Theatre, New York, February 4, 1901.	
The Girl with the Green Eyes.	Savoy Theatre, New York, December 25, 1902.	
The Truth.	Criterion Theatre, New York, January 7, 1907.	
The City.	Lyric Theatre, New York, December 21, 1909.	
Clyde Fitch and His Letters.	By Montrose J. Moses and Virginia Gerson.	Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1924.
The Case of Clyde Fitch.	By Walter P. Eaton.	"At the New Theatre." Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1910. Also in *Scribner's*, 46: 490–497.
Critical Appreciation.	By Martin Birnbaum.	*Independent*, 67: 123–131.

CLYDE FITCH (1865–1909) *Continued*		
A Study of the Modern Drama.	By Barrett Clark.	New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1925. See p. 375.
"Memorial Edition" of the Plays of Clyde Fitch.	Edited by Montrose J. Moses and Virginia Gerson.	Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1915. 4 vols.
Note: Clyde Fitch wrote 62 plays; 36 of these were original, 21 adaptations, and 5 were dramatizations of novels.		

In view of the modern ocean liner, one cannot help but smile! And this was the deftness of Fitch at full play. Take away from him those characteristics that were known as the Fitch qualities, and that might be termed superficial qualities if they were not truthful reproductions — however much they are dramatically superficial — and the remaining characteristics would indicate his limitations.

The comedy of manners is not only a legitimate form of dramatic art, but it is also one of the hardest forms to make vital. Fitch practised it with success; his plays mostly reflected comedy and manner, but never quite approached the form, as Langdon Mitchell's "The New York Idea" did. For the latter suggested, in satiric quality, the school of Sheridan. "The School for Scandal" has persisted from generation to generation, not because of its story, not because of its reflection of eighteenth century habits and customs, not because of its idea, which is hardly noteworthy, but because of its humanity underlying the superficial, a humanity which is eternal, whether in powder and patches, in hoopskirts, or in the fashions of the present. There is a spontaneous flow of humor in this drama, dependent upon character, rather than

upon situation or local reference. In fact, an overabundance of local reference would take the sympathetic appeal away from a comedy after the age had passed.

In addition, an overemphasis of the local is detrimental to the understanding of a piece, outside its particular locality. Local characteristics, even national characteristics are only useful, in so far as they help to round out the character value of the play. The Americanism in "The Lion and the Mouse" was its ruination in England. The Western allusions in George Ade's "The College Widow", which was presented in London, hastened its return home. It is to be remarked that Fitch successfully produced abroad only those plays of his that were more universal in manner than American. "The Cowboy and the Lady" was only fairly received. But "The Truth" not only brought success to Marie Tempest; because of its psychology, which surmounts the local sense and is much more important, it won its way throughout the Continent. Americans have never quite realized how much of a reputation Fitch had abroad. His last trip to Europe was a veritable sweep of the theatrical field. London had just received favorably "The Woman in the Case", which was an excellent melodrama, and other managers were clamoring for his pieces, no matter how old they were. Sir Charles Wyndham was watching "The Blue Mouse", Belasco was seeking a contract with him, and every one was envious of the Shuberts, who had secured the rights to "The City", that play which was to prove the last forceful flash suggestive of the maturing Fitch.

A list of Fitch's plays will show that in point of variety, if not in point of solidity, he was closely akin to Pinero, without that deep interest in the psychology of character which marks the English playwright. The majority of his plays were but variations of the same theme. His technique was sometimes skilful, at other times it was hasty and crude; at its best it was more polished than vigorous. In the matter of dramatization, one can well imagine why Fitch was unsuccessful in turning Alfred Henry Lewis's "Wolfville Stories" into a Western play. But it is less evident, except in the inherent defects that beset the dramatization of any novel, why it was

that "The House of Mirth", a distinctively New York story of the smart set, written by Edith Wharton, should have missed the mark.

One final characteristic of Fitch needs to be noted, and it becomes distinctive, if the reader is at all familiar with the personalities involved. Nearly always he wrote his plays with a definite actress in view. The consequence is his characters almost invariably partook of the personality of their model. In "The Truth" and in "The Girl with the Green Eyes", the heroines are markedly like the late Clara Bloodgood. In "The Stubbornness of Geraldine", the heroine was closely related to Mary Mannering. It is hard to find a better portrait of Ethel Barrymore than in "Captain Jinks." "Her Own Way" is identified with Maxine Elliott, and "Barbara Frietchie" is synonymous with Julia Marlowe. He chose his actors from the best the stage could then afford; and often his plays made these players, and his acute eye as producer discovered new ones.

Any consideration of his plays would undoubtedly show that what Fitch needed most was the accentuation of the element of idea, of *vital* idea. By the cultivating of this, he would perforce have been obliged to work less rapidly. But Fitch was never careless, even in his rapidity. Quick workmanship was part of his nature; he was quick to observe and quick to appreciate. His humor was ever present, and, as we have said, he dramatized everything that came within his vision. To his sense of character, his sense of situation, and his sense of dialogue, Fitch added a fourth sense distinctively his own — that of New York locality. His position in American Drama is one which has afforded a large amount of healthy enjoyment; and to have given this is to have done a great deal. In the matter of construction, his plays that have been published will serve the student of drama as excellent examples of external stagecraft. They will illustrate in what manner the observation of familiar detail may be made most effective use of, theatrically; they will illustrate by what means the interest of an audience may be held through an ordinary, though none the less picturesque, story.

Clyde Fitch has been dead over fifteen years. Had he lived much beyond forty-five, we should have seen a certain transformation of his technique, and a more pronounced purpose in his plots; for he was becoming deeply conscious of the fundamental truths of life, and he was eager to put strength into his dialogue in order to offset the delicacy and feminine flashes which the public always considered purely Fitchean. "The City" was his first, as it proved to be his last, effort in that direction.

Fitch claimed that he was always measured in the public press by stereotyped phrases. His letters to Mr. John Corbin and to me are full of this complaint. He deplored the fact that the newspapers failed to give him credit for his close study of character, such as one finds in "The Girl with the Green Eyes" and in "The Truth." Only after he was dead did the critics begin to realize the incommunicable flavor permeating his dramas. This flavor came partly from a close understanding of New York life, whether of the past or of the present — in "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines" or in "Girls." But it was in larger degree the flavor of personality. No amount of profundity could ever have limited Clyde Fitch's enthusiasm while writing or rehearsing; he was quick in mind and in execution, and sometimes his very deftness and easy brilliancy were his undoing. He realized this; he tried his best to push back the numberless contracts and offers which claimed his time.

He took his success as naïvely as a boy, but he was planning to place more attention upon the message than he had heretofore done. This might later have handicapped him, for passages of a self-conscious ethical nature in "A Happy Marriage" retarded the action of the piece.

After all, the sum total of Fitch's work cannot be rejected from the body of our dramatic literature; his very style is distinctive and is a measure of the man's outlook upon life. He told his story simply, directly, tenderly, and humorously. One cannot call "The Stubbornness of Geraldine" a great drama, but it has a certain lively charm that no other playwright then seemed able to embody in a play. The tempta-

tion is to call such sentiment commonplace. "Granny" was full of it; so was "The Girl Who Has Everything." Seeing these plays in succession, the theatregoer would criticise their apparent resemblance. But an analysis would inevitably lead to the conclusion that the resemblance lay in the same personality behind them, and not in any monotony of detail.

Clyde Fitch was extravagant in his invention; he was careless in throwing a whole problem away in a line of dialogue. Such extravagance was indicative of his natural interest in all things bearing on human relationships. He brought the whole of life within the compass of home, and he gained his audiences by a seeming comradeship which made them feel that his windows overlooked the very housetops with which they themselves were familiar. He knew how to use the reporter's method; one could see this in "The Woman in the Case" and in "The City." But his usual style was literary, not journalistic; it was narrative in direct fashion, and not impressionistic. If he was cynical, it was friendly banter; he was never bitter. Yet, looking deeper into the printed page of his published plays, it is apparent that he had had quite enough of society at the time of his death; that the city had made such demands upon his physical strength as to turn his desire toward the quietness of country life. There, he might have started the larger work of a different kind had death not put an end to his plans. Whether he would have succeeded is a matter of futile speculation.

He has been dead over fifteen years, and still there is no one to take his place. A remark was once made by Thomas A. Edison to the effect that he hoped some day to have the time at his disposal for making a real contribution to science. But it is not easy to believe that anything he may do will ever surpass his actual genius in hitching his wagon to a star; in other words, in attaching a high imagination to practical conditions. So was it with Clyde Fitch.

IV

Clyde Fitch died in 1909, at the age of forty-four. He left a large fortune as a measure of his popularity. For a period he

was the dominant figure in the American Theatre. Broadway knew him to have two openings in a night; sometimes three of his plays would meet again in New York, as old friends would meet upon the street; there would be a friendly race in the box-office to see which one drew most in popular favor. He wore himself out in the theatre; he spent his time between his town house and country house, giving all he had to give to his plans and rehearsals. He felt he owed a duty to the theatre; therefore he lectured before colleges on his craft. He was conscious all the time of pressure, but it was pressure from within as well as from without. People warned him that he was going too great a pace; he knew it but could not stop. This was not because of any avaricious ambition; it was because there was the creative urge always upon him. It was in 1902, I think, that he wrote to Mr. Herrick: "I may be writing myself out—perhaps I am not to live long—but I have all these ideas, all these plays in my head, and it seems better for me to do them while they are in me, than to lay them aside until they become cold or dead."

Fitch could not have lived in any other atmosphere; he thrived on activity, even if it were only a rapid walk down a country road, or his daily drive which took him away from scenery and actors. He lived in an atmosphere of art, and spent many hours hunting for *objets d'art*. He could not escape his class, even though he saw through it. Maude Adams sensed his limitation, when she wrote him: "I wish you could do some things that you'd hate to do. I wish you could give over for a while your beloved Italy and your admired France and go to some place where the art is dead and life is uppermost — common life. We live so much among people of morbid tendencies, neuresthenics (I can't spell it), and the like — that we begin to think they are real of their kind but it isn't a red blood kind." It is this limitation which held Fitch from that larger universal sympathy, which would have done much to assure his plays a more significant place in the live theatre of to-day.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Case of Percy MacKaye and his Father

I

In the *Theatre Arts Magazine* for April, 1923, Percy MacKaye described fully his father's dream for a Spectatorium which was to house a new musico-dramatic art. It was under construction as a feature of the Chicago World's Fair, in 1893, when a financial panic turned the bonds for the undertaking into so much worthless paper. The failure of the enterprise added to the strain which killed Steele MacKaye only a few months after. But the significance of the undertaking placed his name high among the innovators of the theatre, even though that fact is only now being just discovered.

Long before the foreign experiments which have served to convert both the stage and auditorium of the theatre into something beyond the confines of a proscenium arch — in the eighteen-eighties — Steele MacKaye, at the little Madison Square Theatre, carried on experiments in indirect lighting, in double stages; and, in the eighteen-nineties, in connection with his Spectatorium, he conceived a curtain of light (Luxauleator), sliding and telescopic stages and proscenium adjusters: besides having in his mind a theatre of the Ten Thousand, outdoing the boldness of Reinhardt. We are interested to-day in the transformation which is likely to give us a new stage and a new relationship between the actor and the audience. Reinhardt's Circus Theatre, Norman Bel-Geddes's designs for his "Divine Comedy", the schemes of Herman Rosse, whereby we may escape the limitations of the picture-

frame playhouse, have been hailed as novel and revolutionary. Steele MacKaye hinted at these things over thirty years before. What did he say? "In dramatic art, there is work to be done in this country, of extraordinary importance. The influence of the art is so powerful that the use made of it is a question of great significance to the community. My work has really been to try to secure a finer form of art, and a better use of it, than has been made hitherto." It was such motive which prompted him as an inventor. He was a reformer ahead of his time; he worked with a vast vision, and in the midst of his labors, Percy, the son, watched and caught the fervor of the father. The MacKayes, both of them, have been the two figures in the American Theatre who have reached out for new vistas, new roads, new expansions of theatre art. Both of them have been pioneers, have preached the gospel, seen their endeavors laid aside for the moment, only to be developed later. The man with vision in the theatre always has a hard road to travel, because he is ahead of popular acceptance, and what practical folk consider chimerical rarely receives the financial support necessary for its achievement. In the case of Steele MacKaye this was not the case. His enterprise was on the eve of being financed. Only a panic changed the current. Percy MacKaye, through the sheer force of his conviction, and the steadiness of his vision, has "put across" a series of civic pageants which no one else has been able thus far to do; he has at times awakened civic consciousness to the value of art in the community, and municipal governments have opened their purses, while thousands have combined to share in his belief that art is necessary to the welfare of the social group. Like his father, Percy MacKaye has thrown himself whole-heartedly into gigantic enterprises, making his art serve the common good, and he has come out of it all richer in experience, though hardly ever profiting financially. His devotion has been unique. No other American dramatist has ever sacrificed as much, has ever been as prophetic, has ever entered as whole-heartedly into far-reaching movements as he.

Two young men started their careers under the inspiration

of their fathers. Henry De Mille's son, William, came to the theatre in a way much like that of MacKaye. Sentiment, which marks so much the progress of the theatre, hurried William De Mille along the road toward success. Belasco was glad to aid one of Henry's boys: he did even more than that; he credited another one — Cecil — with a fundamental suggestion which led to the writing of "The Return of Peter Grimm." But the difference between the two sons of two theatre fathers was that whereas Percy maintained his dreams, William listened to the dictates of a "hardened" theatre and catered to it. His "Strongheart" — which he once told me he wanted to make a Negro study instead of an Indian romance, — "The Warrens of Virginia", "The Woman" — these were his distinctive contributions to the theatre "as it was." Cecil De Mille, too, became playwright and director. But, when the final record is made of their activity, it will be found that their contribution is greatest on the side of the moving picture. Their names have ceased to figure in the theatre. William De Mille came to the theatre from Columbia, Percy MacKaye from Harvard. It was then that the Universities were first boasting that they had their contribution to make to the American Drama. Professor Baker was starting his courses in play writing;[1] Professor Matthews was giving his lectures on the interrelation of play with playhouse. Other colleges were noting the gradual encroachment of the living drama in directions where it had so long been kept out by educational distrust of things contemporaneous. There was nothing pioneer about the De Milles; they were bent toward the practical theatre. William allowed his plays to be subjected to the demands of the box-office; he rewrote his dramas at the director's table during rehearsal: they were better constructed than Charles Klein's plays. But "The Woman" was in the tradition of the older generation, — the tradition of Thomas.

Percy MacKaye came to the theatre as a poet: he possessed his father's seriousness, his father's philosophical bent, his

[1] Percy MacKaye was not a product of Professor Baker and Workshop 47, as is popularly believed.

father's tendency to shape generalizations into concrete forms. Like the poet that he was, his attention was at first drawn to purely literary subjects. Stephen Phillips might write on "Francesca da Rimini"; Percy MacKaye selected "Jeanne d'Arc"; Phillips might turn to Goethe's "Faust"; MacKaye turned to Chaucer's "Canterbury Pilgrims." Phillips found inspiration in "Ulysses", MacKaye in "Sappho and Phaon." Being poets, this Englishman and this American used the theatre at first as a means of poetic communication. They both possessed a more distinct dramatic gift than Josephine Preston Peabody; but they conceived the theatre as a place where poetry should come into its own again. Later MacKaye was to turn to prose, but always his point of view, his handling of situation and character, his scene have borne a relation to poetry; his plays always are of a heightened character which is beyond literalism. His ear and heart have always caught the broader strains of human speech than mere realistic meaning. He catches "murmurs and scents of the infinite sea"; he has broad social visions. His impulses have always had some social foundation — a foundation not always secure, not always clearly planned, not always understood, because only half expressed. But, nevertheless, he has been moved by a desire to be of service. To his task he has brought unflagging endeavor, high imagination, oftentimes beauty of lyric expression, a sedate irony, and an appreciation of deeper meanings and motives than mere surfaces might suggest.

Had he been content to do surface work, he might have had greater popular recognition. Both De Mille and MacKaye were far in advance of their fathers in the technique of the theatre. The older men wrote at a time when their contemporaries were Bronson Howard, Bartley Campbell, George Jessop, Fred Marsden, A. C. Gunter, Fred Maeder, J. J. McClosky, A. R. Cazauran, Edward Harrigan, and Henry Guy Carlton. In the days when the Madison Square Theatre, in West Twenty-fourth Street, New York, was the centre of theatrical interest, managed by the Mallory brothers, who combined this business with that of issuing the *Churchman*, which still survives as a religious weekly, theatre managers

were reading their own plays. Daly always gave personal attention to the manuscripts sent him. Palmer announced openly that he was not favorable to the native playwright. But, to judge by the personal note-book of Henry De Mille, who read plays with the assistance of Daniel Frohman, Franklin Sargent, and David Belasco, the manuscripts continued to flow into the office of the little playhouse. In three months, during 1883, some two hundred dramas by Americans were read, and the possible subjects were never accepted without material alteration. When Bronson Howard's "Young Mrs. Winthrop" was in preparation, it was rewritten in accordance with a multitude of suggestions, and was then handed over to Belasco, who had already evinced his remarkable gift for certain phases of stage management. The theatre of that day knew what it wanted, and the playwright was whipped into shape. The current papers were then as persistent in their attack upon the insipidity of the Madison Square drama, as critics are to-day upon the pornographic literature which passes for virile thinking.

The sons of De Mille and MacKaye could never have been content with the fashion of "The Charity Ball" or "Paul Kauvar" and "Hazel Kirke." But young De Mille was satisfied at the start to adhere to the newspaper fetish, with which the stage of his period was dominated: the play of effective incident, of one big moment — a play having nothing to do with problems of a speculative nature. That was William De Mille. Not so Percy MacKaye. From the start, the poetic quality was uppermost. This quality was partly a direct inheritance from his father.

II

James Steele MacKaye was born in Buffalo, June 6, 1842, and at the age of seven moved to New York. His father was a man of some means, who had a home just outside of Buffalo, known as Castle MacKaye; while his grandfather, a Scotchman of sturdy build, was leader of a Scotch "colony", at Argyle, New York, which, so I am informed, was socialistic in character, and analogous to that at "New Harmony",

led by Robert Owen, a friend of his. An earlier ancestor, James Morrison, was a minister and Covenanter, who lived to the ripe age of one hundred and twenty-one years.

The move to New York was due to legal connections of MacKaye's father, who likewise, as a man of affairs, once held the position of president of the Western Union Telegraph Company. It was not until he went to Paris, at the age of sixteen, that Steele turned his attention to the stage, and even then there was no opportunity to gratify his interest practically. At eighteen he came back to America, where for sixteen months he served in the army as a member of the Seventh Regiment. He was an ardent believer in anti-Slavery and claimed friendship with Garrison, Webster, Emerson, and Lincoln. One of his early friends was William James, who described him "at about his twentieth year: effervescing with incoördinated romantic ideas of every description." Reaching the age of twenty-two, and still intent on the stage, he procured a small engagement at the Old Bowery Theatre, in New York, but soon after was sent abroad as an agent for buying pictures. Once more in Paris, he haunted the studios and the theatres, and chance took him in the path of François Delsarte, who recognized in him a startling likeness to his dead son, and who took him under his tutelage.

From now on, and for many years to come, MacKaye was to be an exponent of principles in acting which subdued the old-time ranting, and aimed at the reproduction of natural movement, and of what the papers of the time called "emotionally gentle manner." So closely did the youthful actor identify himself with the methods of his teacher, that he was known in the papers as "Delsarte MacKaye"; but no amount of ridicule could deter him from his set purpose. Later in life, MacKaye wrote:

A man to be a true actor must not only possess the power to portray vividly the emotions which in any given situation would be natural to himself, but he must study the character of the man whom he impersonates, and then act as that man would act in a like situation. This is what Delsarte taught and what Rachel, Sontag, and Calvalho studied with him.

During 1874, MacKaye lectured extensively on the Delsarte system, speaking of the occult nature of emotion; of the science of expression, illustrated by pantomime; of the necessity for æsthetic gymnastics, illustrated by chromatic scales of emotion in the face and figure.

At that time there was something more or less theoretical in such a method; people were regarded as *poseurs* who adopted it. Hence it was that MacKaye was spoken of as a speculative dreamer. It is true that throughout life people said of him that his crude idealism was due to defects in his education; his fancies forced him into many experiments which could not possibly find practical fulfilment. But, nevertheless, he was of a serious turn of mind, and of an experimental nature, and these characteristics combined to give him a distinct streak of philosophical speculation, which is detected in his utterances upon æsthetics.

When Delsarte found himself in the midst of the Franco-Prussian war, MacKaye was travelling in Switzerland (July, 1870); and, on his return to America, hearing that his old friend was in a destitute condition, he immediately arranged for a lecture at Harvard University, the proceeds from which — amounting to ten thousand francs — were sent to Delsarte. The latter died in 1871, bequeathing to his pupil many unpublished manuscripts. There is no discounting MacKaye's enthusiasm over the Delsarte principles; his interest was not only deep, but his execution vivid, so much so that Forrest, listening to him, jumped up, in that impetuous manner of his, and exclaimed, "By G—d, my noble boy, you have let in a flood of light!" Not only did he establish a school of acting which should uphold French naturalism, but his first venture in the theatrical field, the St. James Theatre, which opened in January, 1872, was popularly spoken of as the Delsarte house.

At the very outset it is well to emphasize the theatrical rashness of MacKaye and the philosophic severity of his criticism; it is well to note that his theory of acting affected his work, making it self-conscious; while his tendency to experiment made him limit or expand his ideas in mathe-

matical ratio. A man of many failures, he was yet the forerunner of diverse excellent theatrical innovations. His double stage for the Madison Square Theatre was not as perfect as the revolving platform at the New Theatre, but the principle of usefulness was practically the same. His Spectatorium may have fallen into ruins, carrying with it a fortune and the health of its conceiver, but it foreshadowed the modern Hippodrome. He never profited by failure, and his enthusiasm always made him forgetful of the fact that finance requires practical guarantee. Yet no man of the time, unless it was Henry De Mille, had better opportunity than he to know the physical features of the theatre.

His career as actor began in 1872, when he appeared in "Monaldi", a Venetian story of the seventeenth century, based on Washington Allston's novel. His pale, classic features, his aquiline nose, his sensitive mouth, his intellectual and quiet expression, all tended to mark this tall, slender, and graceful man with distinction. I have before me a clipping which conveys an impression of MacKaye's nature beneath the practice of his Delsarte methods: "If he were paralyzed from the neck down, he could express more with his face than nine-tenths of justly celebrated actors could with all the appliances which nature and art have given them. His speechlessness is as crammed with expression as a thunder-cloud with electricity." There were stirring within him many conflicting interests; the author, actor, and lecturer did not meet on common ground. During part of 1872, MacKaye was in Paris, studying with Regnier, while, in the winter of that year, he remained in England, meeting Charles Reade, Wilkie Collins, and Tom Taylor. With the latter he was led into further experiment, collaborating in the writing of such plays as "A Radical Fool", "Clancarty", and "Arkwright's Wife." At this time, also, he was prompted to dramatize George Eliot's "Silas Marner"; the matter went as far as his meeting the novelist, but, at the crucial point, Lewes, "the dragon", stepped in and put a stop to further negotiations. It was in the Spring of this year that Tom Taylor successfully urged MacKaye to appear as *Hamlet*, bringing to his interpretation

all the originality of the Delsarte method (May 5, 1872). An edition of the play was issued, with notes, and with indications of new stage business.

Evidently MacKaye was encouraged by his start, for I have the record of a booklet, printed in 1872, while he was in Paris, presenting "Extracts from the Press in Reference to the Three Months' Dramatic Season of James Steele MacKaye in New York City, from January 8 to April 1, 1872." During that period, Nym Crinkle appears to have come to his rescue, while he was being attacked for his persistency in the Delsarte method. This was the season of the St. James Theatre, where, on February 1, 1872, MacKaye's "Marriage", an adaptation of Octave Feuillet's "Julie", was given a hearing.

MacKaye's novitiate in the art of play writing was spent in collaboration and in adaptation, two of the dominant methods of the day. Not only this, but the men associated with the Madison Square Theatre reinforced the ideas presented by others. Being actors as well as writers, they knew wherein weak situations might be bettered. So that MacKaye's list of plays, while pointing to technical activity, does not impress one with any striking originality. Here again we find the man meeting with success, yet not sufficiently concentrated to be more than of temporary influence. As an author, he is to be credited with the following:

"Marriage" (1872); "Arkwright's Wife" (1873); "Clancarty" (1874, with Taylor); "Rose Michel" (1875, collaboration); "Queen and Woman" (1876, adaptation from Victor Hugo, with G. V. Pritchard); "Won at Last" (1877); "Through the Dark" (1878); "An Iron Will" (1879, later "Hazel Kirke", 1880); "A Fool's Errand" (1881, adaptation); "Dakolar" (1884); "In Spite of All" (1885); "Rienzi" (1886, rewritten for Barrett); "Anarchy" (1887); "A Noble Rogue" (1888; also "Money Mad", modelled on the style of Hugo's "Jean Valjean"); "Paul Kauvar" (known as "Anarchy", 1887).

The majority of these plays contained melodrama common to that period. It was a period when the physical outlines

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For full bibliography see Moses' "Representative Plays", Vol. III.

Rose Michel.	Union Square Theatre, New York, November 23, 1875.	
Hazel Kirke.	Madison Square Theatre, New York, February 4, 1880.	
Dakolar (based on Ohnet's "Le Maître de Forges").	Lyceum Theatre, New York, April 6, 1885.	
Paul Kauvar; or, Anarchy.	Standard Theatre, New York, December 24, 1887.	
The World Finder: a spectatorio.	Chicago: Spectatorium, 1893, World's Fair.	
Steele Mackaye: Dynamic Artist of the American Theatre.	By Percy MacKaye.	*The Drama*, 138–161, November, 1911; 153–173, February, 1912.
The Theatre of Ten Thousand.	By Percy MacKaye.	*Theatre Arts Magazine*, 7: 116–126, 1923.
Note: Percy MacKaye has in preparation a Life of his father.		

of the theatre were materially changing; when the old gas jets, laboriously turned on at each performance, were now on the eve of being simultaneously ignited by an electric spark; when Ogden Doremus[1] was experimenting with asbestos curtains, to give fireproof protection to the theatre; when MacKaye himself was designing orchestra chairs. It was the later day of the Boucicault drama, which had made demands upon

[1] Percy MacKaye claims that his father's interest in fireproofing theatre scenery antedated this.

the scenic pictures, introducing physical details that were regarded as marvellous. It was the time of Kate Claxton, Ida Vernon, Clara Morris, Montague, Gilbert, Holland, and Ponisi.

MacKaye fell readily into the atmosphere; he imbibed much of the Boucicault technique, without its flexibility, without its humor, without its easy grace and cheerfulness. And yet he was not considered a conservative; on the contrary, the papers regarded him very much as a defier of tradition, especially in comparison with Wallack and Daly. He was only rash, however, in the outward scope of the theatre; for his plays are constructed along conventional lines, with an emotionalism either akin to Boucicault or to Dumas' "Camille."

The five acts of "Won at Last" are epitomized graphically in the program as : "Act I, Ashes; Act II, Embers; Act III, Fire; Act IV, Flame; Act V, Fireside." "Hazel Kirke", which was first presented in 1879 under the title of "The Iron Will", bears all the characteristics of the romantic and melodramatic school of Boucicault. Indeed, critics never let MacKaye alone about the reminiscent touches to be found in dramas. Earnest though he always was, and however high his ideals, he could not escape the sensationalism of Charles Reade's "Dora", of "Amy Robsart", and of "Rose Michel", which he helped to adapt.

MacKaye and De Mille were a great part of the force of the little Madison Square Theatre — a theatre whose greatest thorns seem to have been the Rev. Dr. G. S. Mallory and Marshall Mallory. They were astute business men. When MacKaye went to them, the understanding was that he was to relinquish all patents and copyrights for the period of ten years, and that he was to have five thousand dollars and profits under certain conditions. But the contract was not definite enough. It was not fair to MacKaye. "Hazel Kirke", hailed as a melodrama without a villain, ran for nearly five hundred nights, with MacKaye every now and then assuming the rôle of *Dunstan*. But whenever the Mallorys had the suspicion that they were losing money, it

was a signal for them to try to dispute their contract. In fact, the theatre of that day was not so sound as the theatre of the present. Boucicault was continually involved in litigation regarding his plays, and it was the fashion for all dramatists to have their successes pirated on every occasion. In 1881, according to one authority, four companies were enjoined for playing distorted versions of "Hazel Kirke."

However much MacKaye may have had the correct idea regarding the close treatment of drama, it was only in the expansiveness of outward detail that he dared depart from the conventional structure. No man realized more philosophically than he that a good play must contain some deep knowledge of human nature, some wide experience of life, and some surety in dealing with the craft of the stage. And he drew from himself and his own ambition, when he stated the requisites of a dramatist to be:

> Mechanical instinct, poetic fancy, sensitive sympathies, passionate fervor and vivid imagination, thoroughness in preparation, industry in elaboration, conscience in revision, courage in excision, and dominating all this, that breadth of mind which breeds humility, and that depth of heart whose understanding love goes out in charity to all mankind.

But though he would have had the process so, plays of the Daly period were not evolved; they were not intensive. Realism was just beginning to modify the romantic glow of "The Two Orphans" and "The Lady of Lyons", while it could hardly be claimed that violent action had been succeeded by rational themes. What MacKaye called "the focal purpose" of a play had not departed from French models or from French emotionalism. Howard, Belasco, De Mille, and MacKaye all came under its spell, the latter speculating upon a way of escape. "The master playwright," so he said, "combines the constructive faculty of the mechanic, and the analytical mind of a philosopher, with the æsthetic instinct of a poet, and the ethical ardor of an apostle." In this statement he was beyond his time and generation.

There is no doubting the truth that MacKaye was serious-

minded; in fact, he was continually active, a peculiar combination of a Swedenborgian, a theatrical Edison, and an undisciplined reader of Tyndall, Huxley, and Spencer. His interests lay between religion and civil engineering; he was diversely equipped, and a specialist only in what actual experience taught him. But he never heeded experience for long, preferring to follow his imagination and his inventiveness. Like all dramatists, he was alive to the moment, and when, in 1887, his "Paul Kauvar" was presented, containing all the earmarks of its kind in flimsy sentiment, verboseness, and theatrical effect, he nevertheless claimed himself to be deeply concerned in the problem of "anarchy", under which name the play was first known.

Notwithstanding the fact that the papers called "Paul Kauvar" "tumultuous and declamatory", and critics saw in it imitations of Bulwer, the play attracted wide attention, since there was beneath it a slight tinge of contemporaneousness, despite its Red Terror atmosphere. For MacKaye, being convinced that demagogues were spreading a spirit of anarchy among the masses, determined to show wherein tyranny was unjust, in the hopes of counteracting a revolutionary spirit which he felt existed among the people. To do this, he demanded a large spectacle, which drew from Nym Crinkle the remarks: "Mr. Steele MacKaye, whatever else he may be, is not a 'lisping hawthorn bud.' He doesn't embroider such napkins as the 'Abbé Constantin', and he can't arrange such waxworks as 'Elaine.' He can't stereoscope an emotion, but he can incarnate it if you give him people enough." Percy calls attention to the mass effects in "Paul Kauvar" — the mass spirit of the revolution being the dominant movement of the drama.

The play was doubtless the outcome of certain ideas which were in the air. It was the old cry which was raised in regard to the influx of emigrants whose excessive poverty, together with the yoke of political oppression, drove them to the new country. But with them MacKaye felt that they brought certain foreign ideas which were inimical to the welfare of the American laborer. So it was that "Anarchy", besides being

a melodramatic spectacular, was also a purpose play in the newspaper sense. In 1888, he wrote:

In the struggle between capital and labor in this country, the grasping spirit of corporations and the demoralizing influence of political corruption are constantly affording the demagogue or the dreamer, who has nothing to lose and everything to gain by the destruction of civil order, an opportunity to preach anarchic doctrines with great plausibility. When I first discovered the large extent to which the passions of the working classes were being played upon by the fine phrases of these insidious foes of the American Republic, I determined to investigate, as carefully as circumstances would permit, the means by which these foreign influences were seeking to achieve their diabolic results in this country.

After his dispute with the Mallorys, Mr. MacKaye acted for several years, and he helped plan the future policy of the Lyceum Theatre, launching it with his "Dakolar." Here it was that he began a School of Expression, assisted by David Belasco and Franklin H. Sargent; and it was this School that afterwards became the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. Then he went over to the Lyceum Theatre, on Fourth Avenue, which playhouse soon began to gain prestige under Daniel Frohman, and where E. H. Sothern was on the eve of large recognition. MacKaye's enthusiasm, his charm of manner and his grace, made him well liked, and he was much more at ease in private talk than in acting. He was a charming conversationalist, and possessed what critics called a mind "ratiocinative, not poetic." Interested in painting, sculpture, teaching, managing, play writing, and inventing, he lacked system; he was devoid of concentration. Philosophically, he was under the influence of the transcendentalists, and even the mystic touches in Delsarte bore evidence of Catholic symbolism. His language, outside his plays, was marked by metaphysical distinctions, seen, for instance, in an excellent letter sent to his son from Chicago, on December 15, 1893, in answer to Percy's objections to changes made in some chorals he had written. The statements show first of all a serious attitude

toward all creative work, as well as a modesty which was no small part of his charm; they are likewise evidences of a speculative mind which delighted in analyzing the absolute, the relative, and the conscious in terms of art. This is what he wished to do in his big Columbian spectacle prepared for his Spectatorium; every detail of it was to have philosophical value; even the choruses were to be representative of fine distinctions.

He felt that Percy, at an early age, should have grasped this in the writing of the poetic tasks set before him. At sixteen, the boy had been locked in a room and told to write a storm choral for the great occasion.

Everything in the Cosmic order [wrote the father] is perfect or complete. When I speak of the *Time Chorus*, I mean that which voices the accomplishment of the past. . . . The *Past Time Chorus*, philosophically, represents the real world, and the *Future Time Chorus* represents the ideal world, while the *Eternity Chorus* represents the essential world — the world of principle or spirit. . . . The spirit of the whole is the perfect spirit — universal spirit — the divine spirit. The spirit of the past is the imperfect spirit and the demoniac spirit.

His distinctions of mortal and immortal consciousness clearly mark his scattered reading in metaphysical fields.

We now reach the culmination of Steele MacKaye's life, at the time of the Chicago Exposition of 1893. All his theatrical extravagance overflowed and ran riot in the Columbian Celebration Company, organized to exploit his Spectatorium, a building devised for his entertainment, which was called "Spectatorio." This was a combination of grand scenic display with Oratorio, in which stage realism was to be carried to its highest perfection. It was to be a Hippodrome in size, with appliances of every conceivable power, so arranged as to create illusions of the noblest order. The stage, called a "Scenitorium", was to contain an immense reservoir for water effects, and around this were to be grouped MacKaye's remarkable inventions. What was the aim of this new art

which Steele MacKaye schemed to near fruition? He wrote at the time:

> Since . . . the realistic is that element in art most thoroughly comprehensible to the common people, I have labored, first, to increase and improve the element of realism in stage art, and then so to combine that with the spiritual and poetic as to make the fascinating force of realism a means of popularizing idealism. . . . I also devised a new order of theatric art, the aim of which was to unite the mystic with the realistic for the moving presentation of the themes of human history, in such wise as to illumine the philosophy of historic fact, and to awaken even the most ordinary minds to the ideal value of the ideal.

It is not necessary to go into details regarding this mammoth shell. In it were to be erected automatic combination stages, allowing of any variety of motions; wave-current makers, for the creation of currents of water which were to be regulated as to velocity and height; wind-current makers, so conceived as to create cyclone velocity from the gentlest breeze; weather-makers, for atmospheric effects, such as large rainbows; illuminoscopes, "by means of which the scope and character of the illumination of the scene can be instantly determined"; colorators, for tints according to the changing hours; nebulators, for cloud effects; and a luxauleator, which was to be a dazzling sheet of light to take the place of a curtain. Examining the large scope of MacKaye's idea, it is surprising how near he came to the conception of a Hippodrome. He aimed at mechanical duplication of Nature; mechanical acceleration of mystery. The production in such a huge machinery was to be called a "Spectatorio", which was "a species of performance celebrating a theme which may be either historic, fabulous, or fanciful. It illustrates its subjects by great pictures — whose stories are told in pantomime, and whose sentimental, ethical, or ideal meaning is celebrated or interpreted by music." On one hand he had in mind the most extravagant display of Barnum; on the other he accepted as a model Cody's Wild West Show. Undoubtedly the educational vastness of such an enterprise met with some enthusiasm and

support; preparations actually began for the mounting of "The Great Discovery", which was to epitomize the life of Columbus. The financial figures of returns were chimerical, with the seating capacity of over ten thousand people, and the other sources of income to cover the initial expenditure of nearly a million dollars. The structure was to have occupied the northeastern corner of Jackson Park.

Any one in the theatre will understand that the very magnitude of the undertaking was enough to handicap the business and to kill the man in control. MacKaye's whole nervous system went to pieces as he saw the money slipping from his hands. The Spectatorium was only a skeleton when the company went into the hands of a receiver because of depression in Wall Street. His brain teeming with projects, MacKaye was able, ordinarily, through a natural gift of persuasiveness, to carry any amount of enthusiasm. But now he was broken in health. He was given a benefit which enabled him to start on a trip to California, but, on his way, while passing through Timpas, Colorado, he died aboard the train, on February 25, 1894. Percy MacKaye believes that had the Spectatorium been a success, it "might have laid [in 1893] the beginnings in America of an art related and comparable, on the one hand, to that of Wagner; on the other, to the unrevived spectacles of the days of Inigo Jones."

III

Percy MacKaye was born in New York, March 16, 1875. He took a Bachelor of Arts degree at Harvard, in 1897. He was the author at that time of "A Garland to Silvia", written while he was in Europe. He matriculated at the University of Leipzig, and his studies there partly resulted in his writing "Fenris the Wolf" (1905). That he was critical of himself is seen by the illuminating autobiographical analysis that preceded the printed text of "A Garland to Silvia." This is dated Rome, March, 1899, and there are comments added by Percy MacKaye — not any longer Percy Wallace MacKaye — the poet of more experience viewing his own immaturity.

"In 1896," writes the older Percy, "leadership in the drama as a native expression or technical craft could hardly have been said to have commenced in our country. A young American, planning to adopt the profession of play writing strictly as an art, must have sought far and probably in vain through theatre, press, university, society in general, for any adequate modern standards critical or creative. . . . In the universities to-day, then, the dramatic apprentice finds himself definitely related to the beginnings of a renascence in his art, in a way impossible to the author of 'Sylvia'." What the young playwright has to contend with, what is his relation to the thing he creates, — these are the problems MacKaye wove into a "Dramatic Reverie": the poetic text-book of a dramatic apprentice, and hence important in determining the starting point of MacKaye himself, the *Felix* of his play.

The result of this play was that it drew the attention of E. H. Sothern, who gave MacKaye professional encouragement to write "The Canterbury Pilgrims", although it was "Jeanne d'Arc" (1906) that Sothern-Marlowe actually produced. Then followed the long list of dramas, most of which took their place for limited periods in the theatre, and showed the dominant characteristics of the poet-dramatist: poetic imagery, a scholastic fervor, a technical distinction in the handling of poetic lines, which were often handicapped in their fervor by the effort of a thought not always clear. His themes were widely divergent, his localities attractively unusual. His civic conscience became the centre of his "Mater", where he seems to have had a certain humorous attitude toward his own seriousness. In such of his dramas as "Anti-Matrimony" and "To-morrow", a satirical point of view was the moving power. His national vision found expression in such plays as "Yankee Fantasies" and "Washington, the Man Who Made Us." He showed, in "A Thousand Years Ago" — which was inspired by the eighteenth-century Italian comedy, "Turandotte", by Carlo Gozzi — that he could effectively make use of a decorative romance which harked back in some of its effects to the *Commedia dell' arte*. "More subtly," claims Clayton Hamilton, "this play may be con-

PERCY MACKAYE (1875–

For complete bibliography, see Moses' "Representative American Dramas: National and Local."

The Canterbury Pilgrims.	The Coburn Players, Savannah, Ga., April 30, 1909.	
Jeanne D'Arc.	Lyric Theatre, Philadelphia, Pa., October 15, 1906.	
Mater.	Savoy Theatre, New York, September 25, 1908.	
The Scarecrow; or, The Glass of Truth.	Garrick Theatre, New York, January 17, 1911.	
A Thousand Years Ago.	Shubert Theatre, New York, December 1, 1913.	
Saint Louis: A Civic Masque.	Forest Park, Art Hill, St. Louis, Mo., May 28–June 1, 1914.	
Caliban, By the Yellow Sands: A Community Masque.	New York City College Stadium, May 25–June 5, 1916.	
Percy MacKaye: A Sketch of his Life.	With Bibliography of his life.	Reprinted from the Twenty-fifth Anniversary *Report of the Class of 1897.* Harvard: 1922.
The Playhouse and the Play.	By Percy MacKaye.	New York: The Macmillan Co. 1909.
The Civic Theatre.	By Percy MacKaye.	New York: Mitchell Kennerley. 1912.
Community Drama.	By Percy MacKaye.	Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1917.
Playwrights of the New American Theatre.	By Thomas H. Dickinson.	New York: The Macmillan Co. 1925.

ceived as a parabolic comment on a problem of the theatre at the present time (1914)." Gozzi fought against Goldoni, the realist, and lost. MacKaye and "A Thousand Years Ago"; Hazleton and Benrimo and "The Yellow Jacket", fought against Broadway realism. It was a hard fight, long before the "new" art and the "new" theatre significance began to gain substantial effect. Thus MacKaye, close upon Reinhardt's "Sumûrun", became an American pioneer.

This pioneer character, which we have suggested in the career of his father, has marked the son in all he has done. Believing firmly in the theatre as a social institution, he has pled consistently and steadily for civic participation in the life of the theatre. He has never been a pessimist where the playhouse is concerned; he has been lighted too insistently by his own faith in what it can do, to be deterred by what to others have seemed insurmountable obstacles. In his addresses and in his prose works, he has raised questions dealing with the theatre that have challenged thought, even though people have smiled at the chimerical character of the plans he has outlined. He has attacked the theatre at its weakest points, and always with his criticisms have come suggestions that show how clearly he has seen his own vision, even though he may not have put it forward in as sharp a picture. He has worked for theatre endowment and shown its beneficent results. The quality which is uppermost in him even now, after years of seemingly ineffectual preaching, is enthusiasm. He has sought to draw all social activity into the magic circle of the theatre. Once a fellow at a University, where the poet in him was given time to follow his own bent, he approached the problem of the relation of the university to the theatre. In his volumes, "The Playhouse and the Play" (1909) and "The Civic Theatre" (1912), constructive leisure is the centre of his argument; and this leisure can only be enriched by calling into play the highest expressions of art, the highest art instincts of the crowd. Civic functions, American pageants, appealed to his imagination, as they did to no other poet of the day. He created for these communal activities on a huge scale; he coöperated with artists like John W. Alexander, with

musicians like Damrosch and Converse, with scenic artists like Urban and Robert Edmond Jones. He conceived civic rituals and masques. Two thousand five hundred citizens of New York participated in his "Caliban By the Yellow Sands"; five thousand in Boston gave the same masque. He revelled in the scope of the Stadium of the College of the City of New York and the Harvard University Stadium, calling into play all the huge lighting effects known to the theatre.

In other words, an examination into the untiring activity of Percy MacKaye will indicate that he has always seen the theatre as a large creation, a synthesis of all the arts; outdoors or indoors, the drama must be a fitting vehicle for the ideals of democracy. He has himself stated that to all of his activities, which have involved plays, poems, communal dramas, operas, essays, lectures, traveling, organizing, directing, etc., "varied though they have been, my own approach has been primarily that of the poet (in its ancient sense of maker, or builder), seeking manifold yet exact forms of technique for the expression of the poet's individual vision in its relation to human society."

He is continually looking for new fields to conquer, but to conquer for the same cause. His interest in the Kentucky mountains, which resulted in his play, "This Fine-Pretty World", dealing with the so-called "untamed America", amply illustrates his reactions to life and condition; his eye sees instantly the beauty of everything; he is not daunted by squalor; lonely backgrounds are filled with song for him. Between the Untamed and the Tamed he sees a bond of brotherhood; in the lean civilization of the mountains he detects something better than a machine-made world. "The pioneer," he says, "is twin-brother to the poet." If we can offer the mountaineer a new civilization, he can offer us an ancient one. This reciprocity is typical of Percy MacKaye's approach to all subjects. In the natural instinct for dance, in the tribal urge for song, he sees an infinitude of possible developments. And he has used his pen generously in developing the ideas he draws from every situation which catches his interest. This impulse will be his to the end of his days.

"So the vistas glimmer and change," he declares, "but through all their diversities one aim has been the goal of my endeavors: to attain through varied arts a practical synthesis for the poetry of life."

He has created much, and on the whole well. "The Scarecrow," which I have included in my anthology of "American Dramas: National and Local", is his most effective stage piece. "This Fine-Pretty World", though it might be a little strained in its consciousness of a lingual lilt of the mountaineer, and in its adherence to race characteristics, is equally as strong in its folk-lore value as Hatcher Hughes's "Hell-Bent for Heaven", and Lulu Vollmer's "The Shame Woman", "Sun-Up" and "The Dunce Boy." His opera on "Rip Van Winkle" was a better libretto than any of the existent dramatic versions of the Washington Irving story. His "Canterbury Pilgrims", used as an outdoor pastoral comedy by the Coburns, contained much of the zest of Chaucer, and showed itself later easily convertible into a pageant. So one might review Percy MacKaye's entire work and find it predominantly serious, with here and there a deep vein of humor. Passionately desirous of serving humanity, he speaks in accents which the crowd very often cannot understand. He often binds together the interests of a community in imagery which is measure of his own culture: there creeps in an academic quality. But always there is the amplitude of his vision, and that is the part of him he inherited from Steele MacKaye.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Story of the Well-Made Play: Augustus Thomas, William Gillette, and Some Box-Office Dramatists

I

During the season of 1895–1896, the Theatrical Syndicate was formed. From that time until the present, the theatre has suffered from a wrong emphasis placed upon the word "commercial", and from a wrong estimate of the box-office and what the public wants. For years words were bandied back and forth in extenuation and in criticism, actors fought against the "trust" and then succumbed to it. Sarah Bernhardt, in sympathy with those who fought it, was forced to act in circus tents, because the theatrical magnates refused her playhouses in which to act. David Belasco, independent of them, claimed that, unless he walked in the middle of Broadway, some one would dart from a doorway and stab him in the back. The booking of "attractions" on the road was in the hands of a monopoly which had it within their control to make or break a man. Human nature being what it was — and human nature of a certain calibre — the fight was long and bitter. The magazines gave ample room to the views on both sides. The hated theatre "gang" wrote long treatises on the necessity for combination, and painted graphically what a speculative venture the "show" business was; investigations were conducted to bring to light the underhand methods by which managers were discriminated against, and the degrading way in which theatre managers in towns outside New York were reduced to the position of mere janitors, forced to take for their out-of-town theatres what the Syndi-

cate would send them. The same story has within the past decade been enacted in the moving-picture industry.

The word is aptly chosen: the theatre became an "industry", stabilized, to be sure — the actor found himself less a vagabond under the "Trust" system — but requiring a manufactured product, standardized. There was no intellectual standard; the lines of least resistance were followed. Dramatists were trained to write to order, according to specifications. Plays were built for actors; they followed a given fashion, and, like a ready-made suit, at rehearsals the play was altered to fit the figure of this actress, the ability of that actor, and the taste of an audience that had previously happened to relish something of a particular seasoning. Just as Paul Leicester Ford's "Janice Meredith" was written to compete with Doctor S. Weir Mitchell's "Hugh Wynne", so were "Strongheart" and "Brown of Harvard" written to compete with "The College Widow." It was argued that since one dramatized novel — taking advantage of a "best seller" — had made a "hit", another dramatized novel would be as likely to "draw." And thus we had our "When Knighthood Was in Flower", "The Pride of Jennico", and "Alice of Old Vincennes." That "follow in a line" policy holds to-day in the theatre: the theatre managers listen for the belled wether: sheeplike they watch each other and kill creativeness and originality by the "Butterick" pattern of a supposed success.

The Theatre Trust is a matter of theatre history. It only concerns this study as it affects the dramatist. We have hinted, in the Fitch chapter, how one manager limited him. But he was not alone in this respect. Frohman and his contemporaries had willing ears of those content to follow the lines of least resistance. Very little care was taken by the writers of the all-important matter of technique, and the evidence of such reliable men as Daniel Frohman is testimony to the fact that many a manuscript was brought to eventual success by travelling through the various offices and courting criticism with each rejection. This criticism was given when sought, and the astute playwright, of the theatrical quality of Charles Klein, heeded.

The manager looked for the sure-fire thing; if some playwright met with one success, he was sought after in the competitive market. The newer man found it difficult to gain a hearing, as the "sure-fire" men increased in number. These men had had their dire days also, but they were now on top. Eugene Walter had slept on a park bench for many a night; Charles Klein — though he had been able to make a living with such opera librettoes as "El Capitan" — was having a difficult time to break into the legitimate. George Broadhurst, busy with the shaping of farces, had not yet attempted such a piece as "Bought and Paid For", which was hailed as the great emotional drama of the hour. These dramatists — and others like Paul Armstrong, C. M. S. McLellan, and Milton Royle — were all interested in the external drama: the play of type, the play of melodramatic feminine emotion, the play of sentimental social fervor. Klein's "The Lion and the Mouse", Broadhurst's "The Man of the Hour", were workable pieces, "set" in their effects, and dependent on these effects for their commercial value. Their glitter was false on closer view, their climaxes more nearly akin to the old-time melodrama than to fundamental truth.

The distressing state of affairs was that, within these shallow vortices of acting possibilities, Broadhurst and Walter and Bayard Veiller exhibited certain ability to create well. Their technical equipment was unfortunately well ahead of their mental resources. One only has to compare Klein's "The Daughters of Men" with Shaw's "Widowers' Houses" to realize that he had no real understanding of social or economic condition, but merely grasped, in reportorial fashion, at the externals of the problem. The dramatist of that time was keenly alert to newspaper effectiveness. With astuteness, Klein read Ida Tarbell's history of the Standard Oil Company, and behold, there rose before him the main outlines of "The Lion and the Mouse"! Edward Sheldon came across the details of an editorial on the political leader, and wrote "The Boss." There was no irony of a far-seeing interpretation about these plays: it was a stage structure, each erected to catch popular interest.

The box-office being the goal, these men set out to reach it. They did so with cleverness, though with no distinction. Their scripts were written and rewritten; tried out on the road, they went through a transformation from town to town, the managers watching audiences each night with foxlike attention, to see what was telling and what fell flat. One cannot deprecate the amusement quality of these variously well-made plays. They afforded the actors what became known as "actor-proof" parts. There was a trick employed in nearly all of them to catch the breath of interest: the fight in the dark, in Eugene Walter's "The Wolf"; an implement of murder sought for and all the time to be seen by the audience, in Veiller's "The Thirteenth Chair." The poor girl and the wealthy man who tempts her, the beautiful wife and the drunken husband who breaks his way into her bedroom, the unmoral means which are justified because of effective ends — these run through the plays of the period. We have not escaped the pattern, despite the increase of the better play in the theatre. We still sentimentalize over such pieces as Hartley Manners' "Peg o' My Heart" and Frank Bacon's "Lightnin'"; the fact that David Warfield could go so many years playing "The Music Master" illustrates the childlike sentimentalism which still dominates our audiences. And, when these plays are read, they seem so flimsy in their content, so slight in their outline. They become a triumph for the actor, mere second-reader exercises for the dramatist. They add little to the dramaturgy of the nation. It was Warfield who made "The Music Master"; it was Laurette Taylor who enriched Manners' genial Irish comedy, with its trite invention. The American Theatre has always encouraged such frail shells that are scarcely worth reviving when the magic touch of the actor has turned cold. No spiritual, no intellectual motives moved these men. They walked the highly sophisticated thoroughfare of Broadway, watching with the showman's avidity for material. Channing Pollock claims that it was in criticism of that crowd on the Rialto that he wrote his sentimental and thoroughly old-fashioned play, "The Fool." But one has to contrast the content of that

play with the content of Charles Rann Kennedy's "The Servant in the House" to see the difference between Kennedy's understanding of human character, with the use of the symbol made palpitant, and the shallow stage effectiveness of Pollock's newspaper reporting.

I am not claiming that such plays had not a certain vitality to them. They were clever, with a quickness characteristic of the reporter after the surface; they represented a certain swift pace of American life, where new wealth, false standards, sensational speculations, and misplaced power were daily splashed before our eyes by the "yellow journals." The dramatist of the time did not interpret these conditions; he sought to show them in all their startling variety: his effort was not to make his invention moving through its truth, but through the novelty of successive situations. No problems moved him as they did John Galsworthy in "The Silver Box" and "Justice." There was no sense of the "irony of things" in what the dramatist did for the crowds who flowed through the theatre district of New York. And the unfortunate thing the Theatrical Trust did was to concentrate the life of the theatre on or near Broadway. The whole country had to be catered to from that narrow passageway. There was no consistent development of the American dramatist of the "box-office" school in interest, conviction, and vision. No knowledge was required, only instinct for the theatrical.

Some of these men made fortunes and then came to the end of their resources: they had said all they had to say, had invented all they had to invent. The fickle crowd turned to other idols. There were seasons when not to have had a play by Winchell Smith, author of "The Fortune Hunter", "The Boomerang", and "Turn to the Right", would have been a disappointment to theatregoers. Men like Edward C. Carpenter, author of the mildly agreeable comedy, "The Cinderella Man", and the better "Pipes of Pan"; like Paul Dickey, who wrote "The Misleading Lady", have failed to carry on. Coming from his collaboration with David Belasco in "The Rose of the Rancho", one thought that Richard Walton Tully, with his "The Bird of Paradise"

and "Omar, the Tentmaker", would at least contribute something definite to the picturesque stage which combined some of the broadness of "Ben Hur" with the subtler switchboard effects of Belasco's "The Darling of the Gods" and "The Girl of the Golden West." But, like Winchell Smith and E. C. Carpenter, Tully became involved in theatrical management—a management pledged to the old order rather than to the new: management of a highly speculative nature. We cling with hope to Frank Craven, whose "Too Many Cooks" and "The First Year" show a rich and simple observation, for he has an original vein to contribute.

Thus, we could go through a long list of playwrights who have "made good" in the theatre, according to the box-office standard, but who have contributed not one whit to the body of American dramaturgy. Through them one gains an idea that the theatre is merely a cardboard playhouse. From them, the New Theatre, when it was established, gained nothing in the way of native plays. Sheldon's "The Nigger" was a little too advanced for the regular theatre to risk at the time. But it had none of the real moral bravery behind it that marks the work of Eugene O'Neill. The shallowness of Sheldon was to be seen in his "Salvation Nell", which becomes even more surface when compared with Shaw's "Major Barbara." Mary Austin's "The Arrow Maker" was a species of archæological restoration of Indian folklore, which did not have vitality enough to keep it alive in public interest. It was after the failure and abandonment of the New Theatre that Winthrop Ames, his belief still firm that the American dramatist should be encouraged, offered the famous ten-thousand-dollar prize, which was won by a novelist, Alice Brown, whose interest in the theatre has been of secondary nature. She brought to the stage, in "Children of Earth", a quality of feeling her locality; passionless though the drama was, the New England spirit was more deeply ingrained in it than the New England inheritance which Moody tried to suggest in "The Great Divide."

No movement, no effort of a private nature to give the American dramatist a "boost" in the days before the Great

War, would have done much to wean the playwright away from the direct line between himself and the stage, and the only way was that which the commercial manager dictated.

II

Charles Klein, with the nervous technique of the reporter after "copy", was a typical disciple of sheer theatricalism; his day of "The Auctioneer" and "The Music Master" was not his day of "The Lion and the Mouse", "The Third Degree", "The Gamblers", and other dramas heralded as social studies. He was much more suited to the German sentiment of his early pieces than he was to business condition. All of his plots creaked with inconsistencies: his ethical discussions gave way before unethical but "strong" central situations. He was not any too accurate a reporter either; living at the period when the "crook" play — greatly encouraged at the box-office by the Henri Bernstein importation, "The Thief" — was in vogue, he fell into the popular trap of steeping his "crook" with an emotionalism which played upon the unthinking audience and won applause. Being representative of his class, therefore, Mr. Klein's comments on the fate of the dramatist with the commercial manager are historically enlightening, even though the rules he formulated may be shallow and merely expedient. There is a certain pride with which he claimed for himself, in an article written in 1915, that he started the era of the graft play with his "The District Attorney", in 1890. The theme of graft is always useful, he asserted, in a commercial age. The crime play, he boasted, was, in 1915, the order of interest. The historical play, he suggested jeeringly, was dead: to him it really never had lived, because history is prosaic! Thus, human interest was pigeonholed by the "box-office" dramatist. It was such preconceived notions which often fooled the manager and the playwright, and made them both feel that, no matter how long they had been in the business, they still had a lot to learn. Along comes a play of character: it's the vogue — away with situation! The playwright was pictured as a man searching

outside the beaten path for a novelty. New angles of the triangle were twisted out of old material. The mathematical theory was that the more people who used the same theme, the less value the theme had for box-office consumption. It was not alone his experience as a dramatist which made Klein argue this way; he had been one of the Charles Frohman play readers, had sifted through a multitude of manuscripts, had seen at close range the way in which the new dramatist was handled, had waded through the mass of ill-arranged material submitted, each applicant believing that the manager was ready to dig in his pockets and spend money lavishly. In the system of the day there was no room for the genius who followed his own course. It was an era of the plodding playwright. Individuality had to pass through the standard mold. Illusive ideas might come into an office and stay there for others to work over, the manuscript returning to the poor author. If a play was accepted, its title might be changed many times, the various parts pared down to make the "star" part more prominent, new scenes and situations knocked into the structure, all to strengthen its drawing power.

Thus, the highly speculative theatre went its way, shaping the dramatists in its own image. In those days, such men as Henry W. Savage used to proclaim that four weeks would tell whether a play had money in it; if the box-office told a different story, "plant something new that may blossom into a profitable success." Everything had to be concentrated on getting back the "investment." "Play a mill town on pay day", was the slogan. Not a thing was done unless the balance sheet was before the manager to tell the whole story. A sated public demanded extravagance of realistic detail; fortunes were expanded before the curtain rose on the first act; the profits had to come in quickly. "I made a fortune out of 'The Lion and the Mouse'," confessed Henry B. Harris, the manager — "a play that was technically and logically wrong, that failed utterly under analysis, that would not stand adverse criticism for five consecutive minutes." Was this a recommendation to the American dramatist of the time to be illogical, just so the "punch" came at the right

point? Such a manager never approached the theatre from the intellectual angle; he was dealing with a commodity, not an art; he had a formula which he thought was less of a risk than originality. He also, more than likely, had a "star" to be catered to, and this "star" knew in what he or she shone best.

It might be that William De Mille wanted to make "Strongheart" a problem play, but Henry Harris's story smacks of the manager's attitude. According to his view, "Strongheart" was written on the "safe" plan. He said: "Robert Edeson advanced the idea of a college-bred Indian for a play, and I suggested the football interest that was in it. I set William C. De Mille to work on the scheme, paying him in advance for a year's work. Within a twelvemonth the play was handed in. But it was rewritten seven times — in fact, two years' additional work was put on it, before it was ready for production." Yet, even with this expensive process, wherein not a jot of faith in the dramatist as an artist was to be noted, the manager could not reckon the value of his investment. This much he knew — and the knowledge holds to-day with the theatre organized so one-sidedly — that he must make good in New York. That city was the City of Dreadful Night; there could be no harder failure than a great metropolitan one. A play might fail on the road and be entirely changed before it reached the Mecca; but on Broadway a failure was sent to the storehouse; it could never go on the road, for there was no New York prestige to back it. So much of a fetish was this New York success idea, that if a play started making money on the road before it reached Broadway, the manager sought to keep it on the road for fear that, if it were given a chance before Gotham's hardened "first nighters", it would be condemned and would never recover.

The period of the Theatre Trust was a period of whipping plays into shape. Belasco tells the story of his writing "The Rose of the Rancho" twelve times with Richard Walton Tully before it was in condition for his theatre. In other words a new play was always guilty until it was rewritten. It was under suspicion if it was literary. It was a thing of bolts and

rivets. The life that was breathed into it came from a combination of acting and stage incandescence. It appealed to the crowd on the side of sensation. If there was any art value, any spiritual meaning to it, these qualities were accidental. The manager felt that he could thus handle the home dramatist. And the home dramatist was willing to be so manipulated.

In the meantime, Henry Arthur Jones, Pinero, Carton, Grundy, Marshall, Rostand were sending plays across the water, which were not thus manipulated. The manager had faith in them because he had seen them abroad on his annual visit, and had seen them work, without having to pay the initial cost of experiment. The commercial theatre abhorred experiment on the terms of the creative dramatist. The commercial theatre had its own terms. It was on these terms that certain dramatists rose to prominence. Men like Augustus Thomas and William Gillette were a part of that theatre; they worked from the inside. And others of their "school" have worked from the inside, like James Forbes and Channing Pollock. Forbes's "The Chorus Lady" was shaped for a particular actress; his "The Show Shop" was built out of a theatre life he knew as an actor, a road-agent, a general manager of the Henry Harris enterprises. Pollock's ventures were shaped out of his experiences as a press-agent. Thomas had always been of the theatre; Gillette was an actor and wrote largely for his own peculiar personality. Inside their limitations, these men created sincerely. And, in so far as they were sincere, they far exceeded the mass of insincerity which the amateur native playwright piled upon the commercial manager's desk through play bureaus and play agents.

III

Clyde Fitch possessed ingenuity; so does Augustus Thomas. Clyde Fitch depended very largely on external detail, as in "Girls"; Augustus Thomas piled up eccentric marks to such an extent in "The Other Girl" that persons who did not know Broadway could not understand it. In "The City",

Fitch proved, just before his death, that he could handle a powerful theme, however disagreeable; in "The Witching Hour" and subsequent dramas, Mr. Thomas has clearly shown that the cardboard play is no longer sufficient to carry his new interests.

Mr. Thomas's early pieces, "Alabama" (1891), "In Mizzoura" (1893), and "Arizona" (1900), dealt with a life which stirred with something more than smart-set witticism and city environment. Then followed a period when French technique gripped him, and he has never escaped his indebtedness to the foreign facility for making conversation. His broad comedy period encouraged him to draw upon his newspaper observation, and to produce plays deliciously clever but effervescent.

Most of his plots were fragile, slender threads of experience to carry his fine sense of humor. "Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots" (1905) is an apt example of this. On the other hand, "The Earl of Pawtucket" (1903), a *Dundreary* and *Chumley* imitation, and "On the Quiet" (1901) proved to be farces of excellent pattern. Meeting success with the former, through the acting success of Lawrence D'Orsay, Thomas produced another play, "The Embassy Ball" (1905), scintillating but flimsy, a species of wit which in no way touched the heart, and unhappily distorted American types.

Mr. Thomas has technique at his finger's end; he is a man of the world, with a reporter's instinct for timely interests. As all dramatists should be, he is thoroughly familiar with American life, and, since his broad comedy period, his observation and his thought have deepened. Born in St. Louis, Mo., on January 8, 1859, he was public-school bred; became page boy in Washington during the Forty-first Congress; studied law; became a writer and illustrator for such papers as the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, the St. Louis *Republic*, the Kansas City *Times*, the Kansas City *Mirror* (1886), the *Northwestern Miller*, and the New York *World*. Six years were passed in the freight department of a railroad, and with his knowledge of law he made ready to enter politics. His interest in the latter is constantly manifest.

AUGUSTUS THOMAS (1859–)

A complete list of Mr. Thomas's plays in Moses' "Representative Plays", Vol. III.

Alabama.	Madison Square Theatre, New York, April 1, 1891.	
In Mizzoura.	Hooley's Theatre, Chicago, August, 1893.	
Arizona.	Grand Opera House, Chicago, June 12, 1899.	
Colorado.	Palmer's Theatre, New York, January 12, 1902.	
The Earl of Pawtucket.	Madison Square Theatre, New York, February 5, 1903.	
The Witching Hour.	Hackett Theatre, New York, November 18, 1907.	
As a Man Thinks.	39th Street Theatre, New York, March 13, 1911.	
Library Edition of Plays by Mr. Thomas.	Issued by Samuel French.	Each play contains an autobiographical introduction.
Mr. Thomas's New Birth.	By Walter P. Eaton.	In "At the New Theatre and Others." 109–116. Boston: Small, Maynard & Co. 1910.
As Augustus Thomas Thinks.	By Walter P. Eaton.	In "Plays and Players." 25–33. Cincinnati: Stewart & Kidd. 1916.
Mr. Augustus Thomas and some of his Works.	By Frederick M. Smith.	*Sewanee Review*, 15: 192–198, April, 1907.

AUGUSTUS THOMAS (1859–) *Continued*		
The Plays of Augustus Thomas.	By William Winter.	In "The Wallet of Time." Vol. 2. New York: Moffat, Yard & Co. 1913.
The Witching Hour.	By Walter P. Eaton.	In "The American Stage of To-day." Boston: Small, Maynard & Co. 1908.

His début as dramatist was made when, in 1887, he dramatized Mrs. F. H. Burnett's "Editha's Burglar" and also acted in it. Before this, as early as sixteen, he wrote plays like "Alone" and "A Big Rise" for amateurs.

Mr. Thomas is the author of three plays that, while they show the technique for which he is justly noted, likewise sound an interest in telepathy. These are "The Witching Hour" (1908), a manuscript which he had held for ten years, until the time was opportune; "The Harvest Moon" (1909), and "As a Man Thinks" (1911). In "The Witching Hour", a psychology of suggestion, of intimidation, was developed with a consistency and dramatic effectiveness much more convincing than in Charles Klein's "The Third Degree." "The Harvest Moon", while not so interesting a plot, served further to convince one successfully of Thomas's sincere interest in subconscious effect. His science was rudimentary; his exposition such as a man who had *seen* these phenomena would describe them. But none the less are they interesting, and dramatically effective. And there was a sincerity to the "The Witching Hour" unique at the time. Some may say that Mr. Thomas's attitude toward the theatre is unscholastic; but, if we stop to think, the theatre is never scholastic; it rises upon the popular interests of the people. It is not necessary for a drama success to be literature. I remem-

ber Mr. Thomas summing up a few of his plays in this fashion:

"Alabama", if it were produced now, would have no special audience or following. It came at a time, however, when the country was tired of sectional strife, and when it believed there should be a reconciliation. Colonel Henry Watterson said in two public speeches, and also editorially, that up to the time of the production of "Alabama", he had had no assistance of any kind to bring about this reconciliation between the sections, and that "Alabama" did more in one night than he had been able to do in ten years.

"Arizona", he continued, was played just at the time of the Spanish War, and had to do with the raising of a volunteer regiment — young men going to the front.

"The Other Girl" was popular when the prize-fighter was an idol in New York, just after the repeal of the Horton Law. "The Witching Hour" is a seizure of the general attention that is given to telepathy and allied topics. And under all that, lies my own theory, expressed on more than one occasion, that the theatre is the place for the visualizing of ideas — that the theatre is vital only when it is visualing some idea then and at the time in the public mind. The theatre is a vital part of everyday life; it is an institution, and as an institution it has a claim upon the popular attention principally in that fact. When it becomes a thing preservative, a museum for certain literary forms, or a laboratory for galvanizing archaic ideas, it is almost useless, and seldom successful as a business enterprise.

In "As a Man Thinks", Mr. Thomas's vision became no longer fragmentary. Once he read his papers too assiduously, but in this play he added a wider culture and a deeper understanding. Its organic unity was intellectual, yet his dialogue was so excellently constructed that one did not realize how many problems he dropped at will, attacking the next with equal vigor and freshness. The interesting point to note about Mr. Thomas's telepathic dramas is that he not alone stated a problem; in addition, he assumed an attitude. This is why "As a Man Thinks" was invigorating.

Where Mr. Thomas showed growth was in the manifold

variety of his statements; in the digested, rather than in the reflected, opinions he expressed. "As a Man Thinks" should easily win its way on the Continent; its technique was more French than American. But, notwithstanding, it had, in its last act — which is a play in itself — what the American people epitomize as "uplift." The title of this play was simply a variation of the biblical phrasing, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap." The play itself had no single purpose, but on the other hand it had no indefinite suggestiveness. Its interest was a well-plotted matter, showing skill in the technique of the well-made play.

Never before had Mr. Thomas dipped his ladle into the crucible of life with more effect; never had he shown surer grip of the handle. As a man thinks, so are his plays. There is every evidence in "As a Man Thinks" that Mr. Thomas was thinking. And because of that, he ceased placing so much dependence upon the cardboard house.

His dramas were always well mounted; they always contained atmosphere in their scenes; they were always well dressed and well acted. But there was something beyond the witticism of lines in Thomas of the period marked by "The Witching Hour" and "As a Man Thinks." He had the same brilliancy, but he also possessed dignity and seriousness. Not one of his other plays has ever reached this plane of authority. And that is the limitation of the theatre training he received.

He stands self-confessed in a very delightful set of prefaces he has written for a library edition of a number of his plays: "Oliver Goldsmith", "In Mizzoura", "Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots", "The Earl of Pawtucket", and "The Witching Hour." He traces the processes by which these plays came to life, the external incentives, drawn from his own interests and expediency. He suggests the way in which an actor may creep into the structure, how biography may guide the inventive direction of one's mind. These prefaces become a handbook for the novice in the technical art of play building. They become autobiographical, and are written with pleasant humor. Mr. Thomas has done a service in thus giving one a peep into his workshop, with all the chips and dramatic shavings lying

around on the floor. He has made vivid bits out of his own life that have served him in his "trade." He was not ashamed of making a play with scissors and pastepot. He so confesses in "Oliver Goldsmith." "'Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots'," he naïvely writes, "was salvage; that is to say, it was the marketing of odds and ends and remnants, utterly useless for any other purpose." Does not this statement show the cardboard nature of the product of the nineties? But it may well be asked whether play structure does not under all conditions involve certain elements Mr. Thomas takes such pains to unfold for the amateur? A play cannot live alone by ideas: it has an organism which must fit in with the organism of the theatre. That is something Henry James never could understand. It is a thing Mr. Thomas understood about as well as any of his contemporaries. He met these conditions with gusto; he even tried to show that the play of this character could carry idea without detracting from its workableness as a stage vehicle. The bones of a play were important to these dramatists; they are important to all plays. In the period preceding Thomas and Fitch and Gillette and Belasco, these bones seemed to be crushed and crumbled, in something that breathed hard to live, suggested no live humanity, and became real only in so far as the actor was able to make it real. Like Mr. Gillette, Mr. Thomas within recent years has added nothing to his list of plays. Unlike Mr. Gillette, who for many reasons has not been over-active on the stage, Mr. Thomas has been engaged in theatre operations, working with the theatre managers in their last struggles with the actors — combined as the Actor's Equity, a labor union — who made demands for their own economic betterment. This is theatre history, affecting the dramatist only in those aspects which have nothing to do with his initial impulses of creation, which are the impulses most potent in the building up of a real native drama.

IV

William Gillette is another American dramatist who was master of the well-made play — a species that involves the

cardboard characteristics used with reticence. He was born in Hartford, Conn., on July 24, 1855, his family lineage comprising many noted names. His father was at one time United States Senator and a man of keen intellect; among his relatives he counts Henry Ward Beecher and Charles Dudley Warner. Young Gillette's education was carefully conducted. It seems that as far back as nursery days the boy owned his miniature theatre, and was quick in his mechanical inventions. Thus equipped, Gillette, as early as 1877, had received a certain amount of theatrical training.

It is the primary object of every dramatist to amuse an audience. It is the primary object of every audience to seek amusement. But there are standards of pleasure as there are standards of morality, and we have to question our right to enjoy, as we question our right to live. Amusement varies with the type of play, and this type varies with the grade of playhouse.

Now, it has been the primary object of William Gillette to amuse, and every audience that he drew was given healthy amusement. His standard of pleasure was simple: to hold the attention by appealing to a childlike thirst in all of us for a story and for excitement. His types of play are so varied that we find different pleasure in "The Private Secretary" from that in "Secret Service." Only once did Mr. Gillette as an actor approach a problem with great success; that was in "The Admirable Crichton", which J. M. Barrie wrote. As a a dramatist himself, Mr. Gillette has never had any other purpose than to amuse; and he has reached his effects through farce and melodrama. These two elements were raised to the highest grade through superlative workmanship; they were found appropriate for the best audiences because of the stage management and the peculiarly individualistic acting of Mr. Gillette. "Sherlock Holmes" (1899) was an example of a rousing melodrama, constructed in harmony with his method of acting.

Joseph Jefferson once said that he had no set ambition to uplift the stage, and in consequence his memory is sweet rather than invigorating. William Gillette has claimed that he cares

nothing for critical theories; that, when he has reached the heart of the masses, he knows he is right. He has never sought to prove any problem. But, as a dramatist, he has been able to demonstrate that neither farce nor melodrama needs to sacrifice the essential qualities of humanity.

In "The Private Secretary" there is a lovable atmosphere surrounding the diffident minister, no matter how ridiculous the positions in which he is placed. Throughout "Sherlock Holmes", the great detective and *Dr. Watson* are forceful characters, apart from the situations of force through which they make their appeal. There is no doubt in my mind as to how much of this has been due to William Gillette, the actor. These rôles, which made his stage career, were themselves made by his method of acting — tense, mostly silent, persistently dominant, and, as Norman Hapgood once wrote, deeply theatrical and stealthy. Upon the stage he was quiet, slow, dignified; his style was one of nervous repression, of dry humor that was incisive and subtle. Such slowness, in the midst of rapid action, of tense situation, was peculiar to this actor alone.

Mr. Gillette has written many plays since he began his career as a dramatist in 1881. There were divers failures between successes.

With the aid of Mrs. F. H. Burnett, beginning as Thomas began, he wrote "Esmeralda" in 1881; he adapted "Digby's Secretary" from the German (1884), and "She" from Rider Haggard's novel (1887). From the French and German he took many situations. But he could so transmute ideas as to make "Because She Loved Him So" (1899) and "Sherlock Holmes" essentially his own, even though the former was taken from the French, and the latter from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories. Some say even that "The Private Secretary" lurks on the German stage. As examples of his own originality, therefore, we have to turn to "Held by the Enemy" (1886), "Too Much Johnson" (1894), "Secret Service" (1896), and "Clarice" (1905).

There has been no set system to Gillette, the dramatist; in this respect he is much more difficult to characterize than as an

actor. For, if we say that his dramas represent "well-made" plays, we attribute to them an artificiality which is usually attributable to Scribe. Were I to measure the dramatist by "The Private Secretary", I should claim that, while it was loosely strung and faithfully modelled along conventional lines of farce, at least it was excellently illustrative of the *genre*. Were I to measure him by "Held by the Enemy", I should call it typical melodrama, which had just failed in its aim for consistency and truth, even though it foreshadowed a better drama and reflected in the war correspondent something of the "Private Secretary." "Secret Service" possesses all the tone and color of Southern feeling during the Civil War; atmospherically it holds all the stress and strain. Southerners, treasuring memories of the sectional struggle, have succumbed to its appeal. Mr. Herne's "Griffith Davenport" — much sounder in its deeper phases — alone can be compared with it; by its side, Bronson Howard's "Shenandoah" is stagey.

From the motive standpoint, Mr. Gillette might have been led to write a play of purpose, after appearing in "The Admirable Crichton" — one of the most delightful of social satires. But he was content to amuse himself with the character of the *Butler*, a rôle which fitted exactly into the eccentricities of Mr. Gillette, the actor. Once he allowed himself to stretch beyond his limitations, and, in his own adaptation of Bernstein's "Samson", he entered the realm of emotion. But he is distinctively unemotional as an actor. Even in simple love scenes, such as one finds in "Secret Service" and in "Clarice", he made appeal through the sentiment of situation, through the exquisite sensitiveness of outward detail, rather than through romantic attitude and heart fervor.

It has gone against the grain for Mr. Gillette to be purposeful; one would think that this might lead to his being prolific. But Mr. Gillette has always been the most cautious of dramatists. Fundamentally, he is right regarding his belief that audiences wish to be amused. He turned on green lights in "Sherlock Holmes" — the same green lights that illuminate the pages of "Ragged Dick" — and people who

patronized Ibsen's "The Wild Duck" and "Rosmersholm" sat enthralled. He dramatized a cigar in "Secret Service" and in "Sherlock Holmes", using it also to effect in Barrie's "The Admirable Crichton." As a dramatist Mr. Gillette has done much to prove the legitimacy of melodrama.

In plays by Gillette and Thomas, one can see that there has always been something more than their mere articulateness. In their hands the cardboard play has never been shallow. One regrets, however, that their "serviceableness" to the theatre "as it was", keeps them from being of very much importance to the theatre "as it is" and "will be."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The American Dramatist's Neglected Opportunity: Pageantry. Should the Poetic Drama Be Dramatized? Josephine Preston Peabody

I

It is a healthy condition for us to have reached in drama, when we become conscious of its presence in the community, and when we are furthermore made aware of its power, both positive and negative. For, after all, it is not through accident that the theatre was established, but as a result of the fundamental instinct for expression and as a symbol of some overtowering emotion, within the experience of us all. The old tribal *vocero*, or songs of grief, so excellently discussed by Professor Gummere, while more primitive in form and more elemental in idea than the modern civic response to condition, are not so very far removed in the communal psychology which necessitated them, from the present social response which Le Bon has analyzed in his treatise on "The Crowd."[1]

Hence, the theatre is founded upon what might almost be termed an immutable masonry of human need. We could change Pinero's wisdom in "Mid-Channel" and direct it to our ends by saying that since man and woman and the shape of a hen's egg are the constant facts of life, the theatre is

[1] See chapter in Clayton Hamilton's "The Theory of the Theatre" on "The Psychology of Theatre Audiences", pp. 30–58; also W. P. Eaton's "The American Stage of To-day", in which there is a chapter on "Crowds and Mr. Hamilton", pp. 282–290; also Professor Brander Matthews's "A Study of the Drama", Chapter IV, "The Influence of the Audience", pp. 68–91.

something beyond external endowment; it finds its sanction in, nay more, is coincident with, the very act of living.

There is no doubt that we have, for the instant, lost sight of the reasons why the theatre exists, even though we are growing more and more conscious of its importance as a social institution and as a cultural and an educational force; we are also not quite sure in our minds whether we have a right to enjoy what we enjoy, even though public decency bars "The Moulin Rouge" from the theatre, and establishes a censorship for moving pictures.

In our attitude toward the playhouse, we are constantly contradicting ourselves, possibly because we find, with Goethe, that it is easier to do than to think. That is characteristic of communal restlessness, if Le Bon is right in his assertion that an idea must be transmuted into action; therefore, excessive sentiment and symbols are representative of popular taste.

The theatre is not only a source of amusement, but it should be a source of the right kind of amusement; that is the only way in which it will ever become permanently instructive; through vital interest rather than through set and deadly purpose will it ever hope to mold public opinion. If the Mayor of Philadelphia was overcautious in prohibiting the New Theatre company from presenting Galsworthy's "Strife" in that city, for fear that its labor motive would draw fire from the car strikers at war in 1910, the New Theatre was unwise in heralding its mission — which was to clear the atmosphere of Philadelphia with a little of Galsworthy's philosophy about capital and labor.

Yet the incident was significant, for it pointed to one of the essential functions of the theatre — to prompt civic thought; and it likewise indicated its true relation to the civic body. It is necessary to emphasize these conditions, inasmuch as our present discussion is to deal with communal consciousness of art and civic interest in art.

We have dropped many adjuncts of the theatre because we have tried to limit the world of drama to the horizon of the footlights. We have devoted ourselves so insistently to subtle considerations of the clash of individual will with indi-

vidual will, that we have let slip an expression of art which results from such a principle as Le Bon's that "collectivities alone are capable of great disinterestedness and great devotion."

If one reads dramatic history correctly, it is very evident that while forms change and the methods of appeal alter, the psychology of the crowd remains fundamentally the same. Not only is this true, but, even though our audiences are herded together under the same roof, and no longer, as a general rule, cling to the hillside beneath a clear sky, they go to a Hippodrome as of yore, even though the spectacle is less violent than the ancient one; they witness Ibsen's "Ghosts", not realizing its nearness to "Œdipus"; they applaud Pavlowa and Mordkin, and are gripped by the ecclesiasticism of the Middle Ages found in Maeterlinck's "Sister Beatrice", or in the Reinhardt spectacle of "The Miracle."

The footlights, the picture frame of the proscenium arch, the orchestra, all tend toward making the theatre more intimate and more subtle. Hence, in the legitimate drama there is a group sentiment rather than a communal sweep, a more calculating effect or artifice than appeals to a great crowd. In fact, the more delicate an actor's art, the more limited his immediate influence, as far as the numbers of his audience are concerned. No one could regard the extensive spectacle of Schiller's "The Maid of Orleans", as given some years ago by Miss Maude Adams before fifteen thousand spectators in the Harvard Stadium, as anything more than an interesting pageant, totally unsuited for any other than visual effect. When the city of Gloucester, Massachusetts, celebrated its founding, in 1909, by an elaborate *fête*, during which Percy MacKaye's "Canterbury Pilgrims" was mounted in gorgeous processional, another fifteen thousand were moved in the spirit of popular appreciation of broad color and large *ensemble*. In neither of these attempts did the interest proceed deeper than that created by novelty, but both of them to a great extent suggested the possibility of a communal art, distinctively American in its image and in its historical significance.

Shall the theatre, therefore, be taken at times from the

footlight into the sunlight and the moonlight? Is that the quickest and best way of developing a civic consciousness of theatrical art? We look back on the Hudson-Fulton celebration (1909), with its water pageant rather devoid of intent in the day, but brilliantly aglow at night, with its floats far less artistically conceived than the Mardi Gras groups in New Orleans; we recall the massiveness of "Caliban" at the City College Stadium, and we wonder whether this carrying of the art impulse into the open, beneath the sunlight or the moonlight, will tend to sharpen civic appreciation, or simply to cater to a liking for bulk. For, even a processional demands the preservation of sequence as well as the maintenance of association; it necessitates the participation of citizens rather than the employment of professional actors.

Once more we have Ben Greet to thank for turning our eyes from the footlight to the sunlight and the moonlight. It was about twenty-two years ago that, with the inestimable assistance of Miss Edith Wynne Matthison, he brought Shakespeare into the open, and the warm sunlight of a summer afternoon played fitfully on *Rosalind's* hair, while in the evening the moon suffused "A Midsummer Night's Dream" with a fairy quality which no incandescence could effect.

That initial impulse was followed later by other movements. It encouraged colleges to amateur endeavor; it made possible the Coburn Players; it suggested festivals to small communities and to social groups in crowded quarters of our cities. In other words, though we harked back to the archaic, we realized that it was only to pick up some art instinct which might just as well be developed to-day as it was in the time when guilds were civically responsible for their parts in royal and religious processionals.

This revival was not in a true sense a revival, but a resumption of communal expressiveness. Throughout the country there was shown an incentive to symbolize historic association — at the opening of a bridge, in commemoration of the discovery of a river, in celebration of a country's past, or in the tercentenary of a city's founding. There is every reason to believe that such an impulse, sanely directed, could become

properly instructive, and could exert an influence on popular taste.

II

When art is brought into the sunlight it must be buoyant and not self-conscious; it has to shape itself, not to the one, two, three of theatrical mechanism, but to the pulsating vagaries of Nature. *Rosalind's* voice must be suited to the twitter of winging birds, her laugh must wait upon the echo of itself. I have seen "Twelfth Night" in the starlight, when the actors' voices were resonant with a peculiar aloofness, accentuated by swaying trees and by the expressive silence of sleeping things. Nature seems to play with art in the open; that is why art must play with Nature. For sunlight tends toward the real emotion and moonlight toward the dreams of an exalted spirit, while both demand that artifice approach nearer and nearer to the essence of art, and that the shadow of a feeling be as expressive as the shadow of a leaf.

The time had arrived, we thought then, for us to make use of our natural resources in our communal expression. This did not mean that we had to desert the theatre, that we had to discount the footlight. It simply meant that we need not waste the opportunities offered by the sun and moon. It meant that in our public education we must be made conscious of the fact that Nature furnishes us with stage accessories which only a communal drama may utilize. The members of the Bohemian Club, in California, with their red-wood forest,[1] have revelled in this consciousness since 1878.

Only years will prove whether or not this communal interest will some day result in a special folk-drama, a special folk-music, a special folk-dance, a special folk-pageant. At the present time, communal play writing, as handled by Professor Frederick H. Koch, of the University of North

[1] The Stage Guild Masques, by Stevens and Kenneth Sawyer Goodman, were done for the Art Students' League, Chicago. They were "The Daimis's Head" (Mardi-Gras, 1911), "The Masque of Montezuma" (Feb. 20, 1912), "Cæsar's Gods" (Mardi-Gras, 1913), "Rainald and the Red Wolf" (Mardi-Gras, 1914). The Cliff-Dwellers gave "The Masque of Quetzal's Bowl", Feb. 10, 1911.

Carolina, is resulting in a most encouraging development of a type of one-act play, as sincere in the handling of local material as was the Gaelic revival under the inspiration of Yeats. Our contention is that the time is just as propitious now for this communal renaissance and consequent communal expression as it ever was in any period of dramatic history. It is only the footlight that has really changed, that typifies theatrical convention. We are just waking up to the fact that we have let slip a valuable asset in art; we have done that, even though we hear everywhere the necessity for our being in harmony with Nature. The Greeks utilized sunlight and moonlight in their communal expression; but we, in accord with our general wastefulness of natural resources, have been artistically blind to all but the incandescent bulb. Reinhardt, and others on the Continent, with their Circus Theatres, their playhouses for five thousand, bring back to us the possibilities of the Greek Theatre. For many years past, the Berkeley Hearst Theatre has led the way to a revival of interest in Greek drama.

When audiences take to the open, their amusements expand to accord with the space around them. An entirely different set of values has to be reckoned with. The open invites only that kind of entertainment which harmonizes with the peace and quiet of the hills on one hand, and with the majesty and beauty of the scenery on the other. The Greeks drew religion and tragedy from the secret sources of Nature; they conducted their dances, they sang their Bacchic choruses, they celebrated their national sentiment beneath the blue sky. Theirs was a mixture of religious devotion and exaltation with definite art form. Has an open-air theatre had any appreciable effect upon our theatrical condition? Has it created any special type of dramatist, other than poets to compose choral odes, like those Percy MacKaye created for his father's dream, "Columbus"? Such a playhouse has thus far had no influence whatever upon our conventional theatre, save in so far as pageantry and patriotism have raised slightly the art ideals of the crowd and the civic pride of the citizen. In the open air, we can never hope to have the same class of

play that is given us in the closed-in theatre, unless we have a communal fervor — religious or patriotic — to sustain it. Out of doors demands something strictly pictorial. For subtlety is lost where largeness is demanded, and delicacy of manner has to give way before charm of movement. "The School for Scandal" would scarcely set well on the greensward stage.

Yet masques and carnivals and pageants and civic parades are necessary in the life of a people, and a public stadium we have hoped would revive old customs, vivify old manners. The open-air theatre invites a new drama and encourages an old form. Some day, Americans may find themselves with a new pageantry of such magnitude that children can learn their history from panorama more real than that now given them in the moving picture, and as resplendent as that sustained by the mediæval guilds or by the Elizabethan Court. On public holidays, the theatre in the open air offers the dramatist a new outlet for expression of an expansive kind. A communal Christmas, a sane Fourth of July, the public function before the grave of the Unknown Soldier — such opportunities suggest to the poet and to the artist infinite varieties of form and expression. Thus far, but few evidences are given that the opportunities are realized.

But, in order to have this pageantry of high excellence, a species of pageant master, such as Percy MacKaye has repeatedly described, will have to be trained. And one of the first things he will have to do will be to keep the poet within bounds, for the greensward stage has its limitations, as well as the legitimate theatre. Yet, a well-trained pageant master, even though we are striving for sane celebration of Independence Day and effective demonstration on Columbus Day, is not as necessary for us to have as well-trained stage managers for our roofed playhouses. People flock to the hillside for a game of football or baseball, and they go to the parks for music only when they are not scared away by programs too classical for their tastes.

People participate in pageantry when there is an anniversary of civic import. We have had ample evidence of that.

They are sure to seek the open for amusement of a democratic sort. Yet, in order to give people drama at minimum cost, which seems to be the aim of social workers, it is not necessary to go to the open as the only means, especially when the medium of Nature does not invite the modern drama, distinctive of our day.

The Civic Theatre[1] has been debated as often as a National Theatre, and some reformers have even gone so far as to seek a Theatre of Ideas, as though there were such a thing. What New York has debated is a stadium, run as our parks are run, only with the endeavor to keep it in touch with the theatrical life of the city. Their park symphonies have proven so potent that any political effort to discontinue them results in vociferous protest. But there has not yet been heard a persistent public clamor for a civic form of theatre entertainment.

The Hippodrome for several years presented large splashes of color on its mammoth stage, and met success only when it stayed away from the spoken word. We hear much about what an educational institution might do for the theatre, but has any institution ever approached the Shuberts and asked them to mount an historical pageant on the Hippodrome stage or in the open? Pageantry has failed, thus far, to inspire the playwright to give us an adequate historical drama.

It is well for a city to drive its citizens more into the open, to educate them in the ways of Nature. To do that, there are better means than by taking the theatre and making it subservient to Nature. The pageant is educational as the college revivals are educational. But Nature demands a play in accord with her own humor. "As You Like It" is typical of this — and with her own setting, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is such a piece. A drama that will train the citizen's ear to the trill of a lark is certainly a drama for all nations, but

[1] It is well to recall the excellent endeavor on the part of the late Charles Sprague Smith, Director of the People's Institute, New York City, to coöperate with the theatrical managers. Reduced prices were offered to school children and wage earners, and plays were recommended by a committee. The idea was well meaning, but met with many handicaps.

the hope for a national drama does not lie in the open-air theatre, even though the hope of the poet might rest upon a stadium ode or a pageant choral.

III

There have been many experiments in the American Theatre which one would have thought sufficiently broad in scope to have called forth the best efforts of the American playwright. If there had been any clear understanding of the relation which the poet bore to the theatre, we might have developed a pastoral drama at the time Ben Greet swept through the country giving performances of Shakespeare on the greensward under the patronage of college groups and society people. But the entertainment he delighted us with was kept alive by exacting efforts on his part, and the poet put his pastoral inspirations into short poems rather than into long dialogues. Only Percy MacKaye, with his "Canterbury Pilgrims", which the Coburns offered for several summers, had the vision to preach the gospel of outdoors in America; he it was who first realized the beauty of sunlight and moonlight; he it was who grasped at the democratic possibilities of the stadium; he it was who did more than any one else to show communities the potency of pageantry; he it was who brought his poetic gifts to bear upon all types of outdoor entertainments, celebrating the vagaries of Nature in Masques and Chorals of far-reaching effectiveness.

The poets however seem to have had their own battles to fight against conventions which directly affected them, and seem to have cared little for the problems of the theatre. If Thomas Woods Stevens turned his efforts in the direction of pageantry, he did so more in the spirit of director than of poet, though he had within him an imagination that could visualize the scene and shape dialogue appropriate to his needs. Others too followed in his wake — men connected with "Foundations" and colleges. But theirs were self-conscious efforts, with an eye upon the renaissance of the pageant as given in England; and their endeavors were bent more in

the direction of education than of conquest of a dramatic form. The pageant continues to be an occasional "stunt" which passes when the occasion is over. Professor George Pierce Baker's "Pilgrim's Tercentenary" (1923), Sidney Howard's pageant, commemorating the Battle of Lexington (1925), were huge undertakings of such a character as create an impulse that soon dies. The pageant has established so far no traditional loyalty to it as a civic form; it is not looked toward as a recurrent celebration, like the Greek devotionals, which became part of religious festivals. It may be that we have been feeling our way for some outlet through which to express our communal feeling. That emotion rises to a great pitch during a World Series; but we have created no drama which so appeals to a crowd. We have a quiet belief in our folk legends, like "Rip Van Winkle" and "Hiawatha", but they are not as devoutly wished for by the crowd as a "home run."

IV

We are being constantly reminded of the inadequacy of the so-called poetic drama to fill the essential demands of the theatre; and, whenever the poetic drama fails to hold the boards, we are prone to deplore the insufficiency of public taste. Yet we are servile imitators, and show no willingness to look behind the traditions with which we are often shackled. There is a preconceived notion that something is lacking in the person who declaims against the literary drama, the closet-drama, or the poetic drama. Candor makes us confess that there is as much ignorance on the part of those who are against as of those who are for it. The mistaken attitude assumed by both ranks is founded upon a contradiction of terms and upon the identification of the conventions of a type with the essence of the poetic principle.

In our consideration, we would not proceed as far as Poe in that peculiar essay of his on "The American Drama", where he suggests that "the first thing necessary is to burn or bury the 'old models' and to forget, as quickly as possible, that ever a play has been penned"; we are too thoroughly

in advocacy of an historical perspective for dramatic criticism. But we do believe with Coleridge that "it is to be lamented that we judge of books (as well as of plays) by books, instead of referring what we read to our own experience."

All things of the theatre should be applied to the theatre. An unactable drama is a contradiction in terms; a poetic drama is simply one phase of a larger and more inclusive art. A college professor once declared that the "playhouse has no monopoly of the dramatic form", while another, in just refutation, called attention to the fact that Byron, Landor, Shelley, Coleridge, Johnson, Tennyson, and Browning, whose dramas are relegated to the closet, if not to the shelf, wrote for the stage and failed.

There is only one thing intended for the playhouse, and that is — drama; whatever its form, whatever its content, it must satisfy the conditions through which it has elected to reach the human spirit. To the university man we would say that *poetry* has no monopoly of the poetic spirit; that conventions have deceived us into believing the poetic drama to consist of *such* rhythm, of *such* rhyme, of *such* length, when in reality its vital measure is the exaltation of the human spirit in the light of truth and beauty.

The modern theatre has been focussing its rays closer and closer upon life — never upon anything else; it made no difference whether you were outside the veil with Ibsen peering in; or inside the veil with Maeterlinck peering out — the active being, spirit, intellect, or flesh was concerned with its protagonist.

According to our idea, the poet has not only misinterpreted the functions of drama, but has limited the essence of the poetic to a manner of expression; he has not only been content to deal with life in the abstract, but he has departed from life in search for beauty. Despite these conditions and these counter-elements, we are safe in claiming, nonetheless, that the time is propitious, as it always has been, for the poetic drama. It will never come from the poet who lacks the dramatic sense, but it will be born of the dramatist in whom the poetic impulse is quick.

Whenever a poet turns playwright, we may be sure that we are to be treated to a baffling maze of half-formed ideas, to metaphor and simile that are lost to the listening ear before they are fully uttered. It does not do to have the dramatist pause in his essential stage structure in order to listen to his own music. The stage is progressive, not contemplative; direct, not indefinite; particular, not general. Remove from it the power to hold, and it is no longer a theatre in the sense that people would have it.

Such drama, I claim, is twice removed in its relationship to the bare boards of the stage, by reason of its surcharged beauty and by reason of its classic form. For the actor, it is only an exercise in reading; for the audience, it has the heavy odor of crowded flowers, badly arranged. The poet, turned dramatist, is condescending toward the stage; and he has added nothing to the theatre that it did not already know; has gained nothing from the theatre, even though there was much to gain. He has put poetry into the form of drama, without having any drama in his poetry.

V

When Josephine Preston Peabody's "The Piper" won the Stratford prize, and was played at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre by Benson and his company, in the Summer of 1910, many people proclaimed that blank verse had come into its own again. No manager in America before then would touch it for presentation, and it was once declined by the New Theatre, which hastened later to produce it. There is much to say in extenuation of the American attitude. "The Piper" is drama twice removed — because of its beauty, and because of its form, loosely knit. There is also a pronounced indefiniteness of idea.

Naturally, Mrs. Marks[1] (Miss Peabody) had some justification in her confidence that she had given the stage a notable poetic contribution; naturally she had theories regarding

[1] Mrs. Marks died in 1924. She wrote "Marlowe" (1901) and other dramas mentioned in my "Representative American Dramas: National and Local."

the province of poetry on the stage. But her technical ideas were wrong, and not in accord with the modern practice of the theatre. Maybe, as a poet, she was right in her method, but it was a rock upon which she foundered. She there found the battered wrecks of Thomas Bailey Aldrich's "Judith of Bethulia", of Percy MacKaye's "Sappho and Phaon", wrecks beautiful in their dramatic inertia, clogged with the passive wealth of simile and metaphor. Mrs. Marks's mind was literary: the themes she selected for her plays were drawn from literary biography. Her passionate regard for Shakespeare, her own type of mind, her personality, which was strikingly beautiful but undramatic — all proclaimed her farthest away from the "hardened" theatre which demands so much compromise, which abhors expansiveness and contemplation, and explanation of inner condition.

The realism which was symbolized by Ibsen, and the symbolism which was realized by Maeterlinck not only served to intensify dramatic material and narrow external action, but they opened a channel for the actor which only his genius could compass. It called forth some exceptional playing in the theatre, different from the statuesque playing of the "golden days", where "words, words, words" were muttered in tones and with gestures beyond the naturalness of man. The worn-out "tricks" of the theatre have been confiscated, along with the old-fashioned theatrical methods of interpretation. Introspective significance has decreased the violent reaction, and the most beautiful acting has now become the most quiet acting.

How many of us have returned again and again to Lamb's essay on the "Tragedies of Shakespeare", in which occurs the significant passage, anent the impracticableness of playing "Hamlet" — a passage which reads: "Nine parts in ten of what *Hamlet* does are transactions between himself and his moral sense," — transactions reduced to mere words for the sake of the reader. This leads one to believe that an Elizabethan commentator may some day issue an edition of Shakespeare with passages, called by Lamb "silent meditations", printed in italics to serve as psychological stage directions.

Nevertheless, there is something in Lamb's argument. His latest adherent is Maeterlinck, who likewise believes in the unsuitableness of unseen forces for *expressive* interpretation. They must be quietly realized. Lamb and Maeterlinck have both found the theatre incapable of solving the problem of meditation on the stage, yet the poetic drama must of necessity deal with just those phases of character and of destiny which are hardest to reconcile with custom and habit and familiar, commonplace movement. I believe that the contemplative element, which has been so much a part of the poetic drama of the past, can be dealt with by what the scenic artist calls the "visible" mood of a play. The scenic artist, it seems to me, points to a return of the poetic theme to the stage; while the architectural revolution which threatens the proscenium arch, suggests that no background the poet might invent will be too broad for the concrete stage of the future to handle.

Dramatic literature of recent years represents a revulsion from conventional notions which have grown up around ancient models. Quotidian happenings in the development of the individual have been raised to high dignity. All of this change has brought a consequent change in the poetic drama; the scope of the playwright has become wider with the development throughout the world of more democratic tendencies in society. The entire progression is indicated by Maeterlinck's statement that whereas once there was no poetry in drama save that which narrated the passion of a lover like *Romeo* or *Tristan* or *Paolo*, now a cottager, seated alone by a lighted lamp in the midst of the forces of Fate, is more vitally true and more profoundly significant for us all. Violent activity must be attached to a spiritual centre, to what Coleridge termed a point of relative rest. Expressionism goes further. The loose structure it has adopted to suggest Freudian states of mind affords the dramatist opportunity to defy unities of time and place, and emphasize the unity of "mood" and spiritual meaning. The new form admits of a poetic content.

The poetic drama is therefore in the process of adjustment;

when we demand it for our stage, we do so with preconceived notions of literary excellence and of poetic fervor which, when put to test, fail to stimulate the active curiosity of external vision, and clog the dramatic progression by an overplus of "sublime images" — in themselves demanding a slow mind. Drama moves continuously; the poetic drama, with its demand upon imagination, its appeal to the moral judgment, and its lack of "corporal dimensions", requires to be read. The mind of the reader must be allowed to turn back; the mind of an audience can never turn back.

The poet who writes for the stage should ever remember that the average theatre judges him by his *explicit* word; through this is the *implicit* meaning caught. Most attempts of the unskilled playwrights to deal with symbolism have resulted in an unfailing quality of indefiniteness — mere decoration without the fundamental surety of nature beneath. For even imagination has its consistency; we understand only in so far as we ourselves have experienced. James Russell Lowell claimed that to be a mystic gave no one the license to be misty.

It is well to approach our subject from these various indirect channels, for the poetic drama is not a special form, *per se;* but, to our manner of thinking, any play in which humanity is raised to the heights of greatest spiritual activity or fulfilment. Poetry, therefore, becomes only one of the numerous factors that make drama what it is. Blank verse does not constitute the poetic drama, though some may think so; heightened speech, so beyond the realm of consistent usage, is not its distinguishing mark. Poetry may only hope to have its significant place on the stage when it expresses spiritual quality and psychological strength, amidst environment which allows of much intensive development, and yet which remains familiar.

"Art for art's sake," said Mr. Herne, who in America has thus far come nearest giving us the poetry of the common life, "is mere decoration, but I will not take the truth for truth's sake with the realist, unless it be the *essential* truth." Hence, our new poetic drama will occupy a position much

like the oft-conceived "third empire", so vividly developed by Ibsen; consistent art with consistent truth, art consistent with truth, essential art with essential truth — these are the statements. Ibsen has shown the vital meaning in the common thing; Emerson has told the common man of the vital thing. From the mystic and the realist combined, we in America should be able to evolve a poetic drama. We are not lacking the content but the form. The expressionist believes he has discovered it.

The inevitable conclusion stares us in the face. Our great English poets wrote for the theatre, and most of them failed. Macready thrust Browning to the fore; Irving preserved Tennyson for a while. It is wrong to say, as though there were a constitutional incompatibility between the two, that the reason why these men failed lay in the fact that literature is divorced from the stage. The real matter is that the poet, however much he might love the theatre, has never mastered the technique, and has become impatient of the theatre's restrictions. The miniature painter and the mural artist do not use the same brush, though the latter might find it necessary at times to employ a hair line.

Shall we, therefore, have to confess that the poetic drama needs to be dramatized? This is only a facetious way of saying that out of a mass of beauty and fancy, of imagination and meditation, the poetic drama must be lifted on to a plane of kinship with common sense and human development. In Chicago, at one time, "Macbeth" was given before an audience in moving pictures; the police had to stop the performance, so violent the action; the whole spiritual quality of the piece had been sacrificed for the shell. The poetic drama has suffered from the other extreme!

Coleridge, metaphysician though he was, nevertheless realized the need for a reconciliation between characters as they exist ordinarily with their manner and speech, and the same characters idealized in proportion, stressed in language, filling a large destiny rather than doing an ordinary deed. Until Ibsen arrived, we had only a vague notion as to the utilization of the commonplace on the stage; we were told by the

text-books that a play dealt only with the significant moments in the development of the individual — and by significant they meant violent or picturesque moments. The melodramatists abused this idea, the romanticists and sentimentalists conventionalized it. Then Ibsen, even though trained in the methods of Scribe, wrote "A Doll's House", and soon followed it with the white-heat realism of "Ghosts", and brought the soul out of its shreds and patches into the familiar light of day — familiar and sometimes cruel.

The little moments in life pulsed with vitality. Ibsen used the ordinary speech of intercourse and surcharged it with spiritual intensity. Curiously, before Ibsen was known in America, Mr. Herne had exemplified by his "Margaret Fleming" what depths lay in the tragic of the commonplace; he had instinctively worked out for himself, despite the fact he was forced back into the old subterfuges of the melodramatist in "Shore Acres" and "Sag Harbor", the whole theory of the active presence of hidden forces — a recognition which quickens the entire gamut of life and raises the ordinary into the realm of the poetic.

When Mrs. LeMoyne presented "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon", the one of Browning's plays nearest stage requirements, the weight and beauty of the lines turned the audience into passive listeners of something being read aloud. We forgive in opera what we will not countenance in drama; long recitative passages are colored by music which serves as the necessary stimulant to emotion. The poetic drama, popularly conceived, needs to be relieved of its overweight. Percy MacKaye's "Sappho and Phaon" and Stephen Phillips's "Ulysses" suffered from this accentuation of beauty to the detriment of *motive* power; Hauptmann's "The Sunken Bell", with all the excellence of its symbolic texture, dragged in the moralizing speeches which dulled the mind. The same heaviness was evident in Ridgely Torrence's "El Dorado" (1903) and "Abélard and Héloise" (1907), and in Olive Dargan's "Lords and Lovers" (1906). The need for dramatization is commensurate with the wearying effect upon the average audience.

Maeterlinck, after having tested a theory of the unexpressed in drama, so marvelously worked out in "The Intruder", finally arrived at the conclusion that "whatever the temptation, he [the dramatist] dare not sink into inactivity, become mere philosopher or observer"; he learned through experience with his "puppet theatre" that no situation should be held in abeyance to profundity of speech. The poet, according to Coleridge, has handicapped his success in drama through certain self-conceit; he has forced the actor, who is supposed to interpret character, to stand still and read long descriptions of his own psychology, when, if he be a real actor, he could have suggested all by a flash of expression or a gesture. It is true, as Henry Arthur Jones has intimated, that realism is only justifiable where there is spiritual beauty beyond.

Bernard Shaw has always persisted that wherever emotional climaxes are reached in Shakespeare, "we find passages which are Rossinian in their reliance on symmetry of melody and impressiveness of march to redeem poverty of meaning." His quarrel with the theatre of Shakespeare is our quarrel with the general conception of the position poetry occupies in drama. Most poets regard the drama, not as a reflection, a transcript of life, but as a commentary on life, expressed through the medium of dialogue; they subject everything to their own artistic needs, believing, no doubt, that the predominance of true poetry will cover up the lack of drama, whereas it only serves to accentuate the fact that drama is not there.

The commendable feature about William Vaughn Moody's "The Great Divide" was his proper, though not perfect, use of the poetic content in the dramatic mold; it possesses certain elemental largeness, and its characters are human, retaining their average proportions in the midst of their spiritual aspirations and expansion. Mr. MacKaye's "The Scarecrow", based on Hawthorne, attempted almost successfully to combine the hidden force with the outward expression, but he did not quite reach the texture of New England conscience.[1]

[1] In its acted form, however, with Mr. Frank Reicher in the title rôle, it was most effective.

A surprising proportion of any poetic play deals either with irrelevant imagery, or with mental introspection which precedes action. From speech, it falls into declamation; from character it passes into nothing more than a vehicle for theory or poetic idea, cut aloof from the essential meaning of the moment.

VI

We know that life is greater than drama; that art, whatever its form, is only a means of expressing our comprehension of the life in which we find ourselves. But most of our poets who have attempted drama have not realized how close to life drama really is. It is not a vehicle, but an expression; it does not hold, but it *gives out*. "Peter Pan" represented the genius of Barrie dramatizing Wordsworth's "Heaven lies about us in our infancy", in terms of common experience and of eternal truth. "What Every Woman Knows" and "Quality Street" did not defy the laws of the familiar, yet both plays are shot through with a poetic quality of sentiment.

Far from disparaging the poetic drama, we claim that our stage thirsts for it. Yet we do not blame the manager for being wary of the conventional form, which has neither profited by Maeterlinck nor learned of Ibsen. The pulse of life throbs through the land; there is in our mundane existence the call to the higher things; from the wheat fields year after year comes the cry for labor — the epic cry from the soil. The poet stands confused before the dilemma. "How," he questions, "shall I reconcile the poetic language with the man of wage, with the machinery of utility, with the average moments of life?" Man has his exalted feelings, even when his feet are firmly planted upon earth. I remember once walking along a country road with Clyde Fitch; we passed a fleshy, grimy truck driver in the open field, with a flower in his apology for a buttonhole. "There," said Mr. Fitch, "is the poetry of ordinary existence."

At supreme moments, language, thought, spirit, become supreme. The blacksmith may talk in the poetry of his

uncouth prose; but no one can take from him the purity or rhythm of his feeling when his feeling is pure and rhythmic, or the high resolution of his character, when circumstance and situation prompt it to act, or the strength of his primal being when he is strong. The poet must not mold his character to suit a preconceived notion; in drama one must be true to life rather than to the conventions of art. We know of no form for the theatre other than drama — drama which is divided into relative grades, dependent upon the predominance of certain artistic qualities. Even in dealing with the unseen, Maeterlinck never fails to refer to "active" forces. Only on rare occasions does the average person speak aloud to himself; that is why the soliloquy in realistic drama has fallen into ill favor. And so, one by one, the conventions of drama are disproven or else laid aside for a while.

We need another name for that play which we have been accustomed to call "poetic drama"; we need to discover that the old form has falsified beauty, since it has taken it away from character, from life. Only when we have written a real drama in which poetry occupies its essential position in relation to life, will we cease in our belief that the poetic drama needs to be dramatized.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Case of the American One-Act Play

I

The one-act play can be made into a great thing; there are many examples of its supreme potency. Its craftsmanship is a beautiful articulation when it is handled with the high seriousness it deserves. One has only to read Synge's "Riders to the Sea" to feel what a folk rhythm will do in the way of atmosphere, what a supreme valuation of words will suggest in the way of a full tide of fundamental emotion. Anything short, which has its longer counterpart, has curiously been looked upon as a secondary consideration. But the one-act play is not a foreshortened drama, it is not a remnant cut from any larger piece, it is not a segment of anything that could be amplified, it is not a part of a whole. It is itself, with as complete a life within itself as any other art form has. Its time element is its only limitation, and in that segment of time — which is not the three-hours' traffic of the stage — there must be shaped a complete emotion, a complete justification for that emotion; there must be told a complete story, and all the many reasons for its development must be suggested. Into a few minutes, as the theatre reckons it, there must be swiftly, unerringly injected — not necessarily a slice of life, not necessarily an incident amplified, but a sense of the eternal, a sense of the palpitant human.

The remarkable thing about the development of the one-act play is that it is of such recent origin. Not that we have not

had the one-act measurement before the eighteen-nineties, when the play form that we are considering began to impress us. There have been, since the early days of mediævalism, examples of the short drama, either dropped into larger ones, as the comedy of *Mak*, or as a special form, called an interlude. But I believe that the laws which govern the one-act plays are of modern realization; that they have nothing to do fundamentally with those older short plays, whose compressions were largely prompted by social and spiritual conventions rather than by any realization of their intrinsic art value. But it does not matter in the long run whether we have to go back to the *Commedia dell' arte* for a commencement of the one-act play, should we wish to trace its external history, or to Heywood and to the Frenchmen, who, since the days of Molière, have written farces, burlesques, commediettas, and various drolleries. I do not believe we have to go back so very far at all to determine when the philosophy of the one-act form, as we know it, began to impress itself upon the dramatist in the theatre.

There are comparative similarities between the short-story form and the one-act play; they also have similarity of differences between their larger counterparts, the novel and the drama, which admit of fuller complication. But in one respect the short story falls away from relationship to the one-act play: its emotional quality, its vital force do not have to stand as rigid a comparison with human experience as the drama; its movement does not have to be of as clear-cut a design; does not have to be, I venture to say, though such supreme story-tellers, as De Maupassant and O. Henry, use patterns which unfold inevitably and swiftly, and hence are dramatic prose, even if not intended to be acted.

The case which Edgar Allan Poe once made against the long poem was one based entirely on a temperamental lyrical sense which he himself possessed as a poet. One could not possibly assert, for example, that emotion cannot be sustained for any length of time by a long work of art. But drama recognizes the necessity of relieving the strain of emotion, believing that the stress of excitement can be carried over

periods of rest, of variation. I refer to Poe merely because, in his strictures against the long poem, which would not apply to the long play, he mentions certain qualities which are so peculiarly essential to the life of the one-act play.

The value of the poem [he writes] is in the ratio of this elevating excitement. But all excitements are, through a psychal necessity, transient. That degree of excitement, which would entitle a poem to be so called at all, cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length. After the lapse of half an hour at the very utmost, it flags — fails — a revulsion ensues — and then the poem is, in effect and in fact, no longer such. . . .

One can see here that Poe overlooked the development of true emotion, its gradations to a crisis. One can see here also that he looked, in poetry, for a fine frenzy of feeling which was to his taste, highly colored with temperament, which gives rise to efflorescence of language. To him beauty had nothing to do with either intellect or conscience. Truth was, in his view, inimical to the poet.

In enforcing a truth [he said further] we need severity . . . of language. We must be simple, precise, terse. We must be cool, calm, unimpassioned. In a word, we must be in that mood which, as nearly as possible, is the exact converse of the poetical.

The rhythmic flow of words under excitation at high pressure was therefore his conception of lyric poetry. In his use of the word "unimpassioned" above, he did not realize that tension which the artist may call forth by calm. Otherwise, his paragraph about truth might be descriptive of the technique of Synge, of Dunsany, of many of the best exponents of the one-act play. And I see where a comparison might be made between this form of drama and certain forms of lyric poetry — where the swift fulfilment of its emotional mission must not be allowed to lag by reason of any creative depression.

II

One cannot match the material out of which the modern one-act play was cut with any material of an older period and of a similar shortness. John Maddison Morton (1811–1891) was in England the perpetrator of a host of afterpieces, curtain-raisers, in direct imitation of the light and flimsy entertainments which used to regale the English theatre of the Garrick period, and which were brought to this country with the first band of players who ventured to the colonies. These loosely put together contrivances, which made the most of comic elements, and were saved merely by the skill with which they were acted, are now but literary relics. They were conveniently used to take the bad taste of unremitting tragedy or classicism away from an audience which wanted a sort of happy conclusion to an evening's outing. They were also used in the Morton period to satisfy the groundlings, who came to the theatre early, and who had to wait for the arrival of late comers, when the real bill was given: hence the habit of curtain-raisers. The theatre abroad has had to cater to a special class. If a close examination into the early interlude were made, it would be found that it became at times a sort of entertainment, shoved in between courses at my lord's table, for the mild instruction and amusement of the diners.

None of these reasons can be given for the vigorous development of the one-act play in this country; nor can we stretch a point and say that the form developed from the innocuous "recitation" or dialogue "habit" of the church festival, however much we may recognize that the church festival has been vastly improved by the better one-act play, and by the strong impulse given to amateur acting in this country. Even in the eighties, when W. D. Howells applied his realistic observation to a set of parlor dialogues which had insight, quality, and form, I cannot see in them any relationship to the truly dramatic one-act play, save in so far as he brought to the work, as a fictionist, certain qualifications which are the qualifications of the dramatist. "Invention in the vulgar sense", O. W. Firkins recognized in them, as though dramatic

form coarsened one's handling of the materials of life. To any one who reads "The Albany Depot", "The Elevator", or "The Mouse Trap", there will be detected in Howells the ability to vary a slight incident in an amusing way, the excellent knack of swiftly accentuating the vagaries of outward character. But the deeper emotion, the meaning of dialogue beneath the mere repartee quality which his farces exhibited, he was incapable of handling in the one-act form. His plays were all cut from the same strip. Nevertheless, when a Howells farce found its way to the London stage, Bernard Shaw — probably remembering Morton's perpetrations, which were the pattern for most of the "curtains" of the Victorian period — breathed in gratefulness for some literary application to the form. He wrote, December 7, 1895, of Howells's "A Dangerous Ruffian":

The little piece showed, as might have been expected, that with three weeks' practise the American novelist could write the heads off the poor bunglers to whom our managers generally appeal when they want a small bit of work to amuse the people who come at eight. But no doubt it is pleasanter to be a novelist, to have an intelligent circle of readers comfortably seated by their firesides or swinging sunnily in hammocks in their gardens, to be pleasantly diffuse, to play with your work, to be independent of time and space, than to conform to the stern conditions of the stage and fight with stupidity before and behind the curtain.

All of which is, in itself, a commentary on theatre conditions of the time, and on the state of the one-act play in Great Britain just at the moment when Yeats and Synge and Lady Gregory, through the Irish dramatic renaissance, were about to show how excellent a form the one-act play really was.

The short story crept upon the practisers of the art almost without their knowing what a distinctive, separate form it was, — of a structure its own and with individual laws of its own nature. Many were the definitions of its special province, among the most interesting being Bret Harte's contention that humor was its starting point. I quote that part of Bret Harte's explanation, taken from his *Cornhill* essay, published

in July, 1899, and used by Professor Pattee, in his "Development of the American Short Story":

But while the American literary imagination was still under the influence of English tradition, an unexpected factor was developing to diminish its power. It was *humor*, of a quality as distinct and original as the country and civilization in which it was developed. It was at first noticeable in the anecdote or "story", and, after the fashion of such beginnings, was orally transmitted. It was common in the bar-rooms, the gatherings in the country store, and finally at public meetings in the mouths of "stump orators." Arguments were clinched and political principles illustrated by a "funny story." It invaded even the camp meeting and pulpit. It at last received the currency of the public press. But wherever met it was so distinctively original and novel, so individual and characteristic, that it was at once known and appreciated abroad as an American story. Crude at first, it received a literary polish in the press, but its dominant quality remained. It was concise and condensed, yet suggestive. It was delightfully extravagant, or a miracle of understandment. It voiced not only the dialect, but the habits of thought of a people or locality. It gave a new interest to slang. From a paragraph of a dozen lines it grew into half a column, but always retaining its conciseness and felicity of statement. It was a foe to prolixity of any kind; it admitted no fine writing nor affectation of style. It went directly to the point. It was burdened by no conscientiousness; it was often irreverent; it was devoid of all moral responsibility, but it was original. By degrees it developed character with its incident, often, in a few lines, gave a striking photograph of a community or a section, but always reached its conclusion without an unnecessary word. It became — and still exists as — an essential feature of newspaper literature. It was the parent of the American "short story."

Some of these characteristics persist not only in the short story but in the one-act play; and some of these characteristics are also the weakness of the two forms. For an anecdote that becomes a good short story, in the hands of the excellent craftsman, remains an anecdote in the hands of the bungler;

and many of our magazine stories are merely incidents spread in a thin invention over a certain length. Harte does not define what is short-story material; he merely indicates what factors may be used in a short story. But these factors are often used for themselves alone; anecdotes, labored incidents clamor for an excuse to be put in short narrative form. And it is exactly in the desire on the part of the unskilled to put anecdotes into short stories and plays of one-act length that the uninitiated are deceived in the belief that short-story writing and one-act play construction are the easiest kind of writing, merely because of the shortness. This contemptuous attitude for the small form is not dispelled yet. Such an excellent one-act play as Barrie's "The Twelve-Pound Look" was regarded by the late Charles Frohman as a waste of good material in small space, and he begged the author to make it into a big play.

The habit of not regarding the one-act-play form as worthy of the highest creative ingenuity, the custom of looking at it as a mere catchall for just those separate factors which Harte believed were behind the short story, has handicapped its development in this country. This is one of the causes for its not attaining distinction which at least equals the fervor with which the practice of the form has been manifested from coast to coast. The form has not been consistently practised but has been forced for a practical purpose. "Neither Mr. Yeats nor I take the writing of our plays lightly," Lady Gregory once confessed. And Lord Dunsany, when the divine hand of creation seemed to be upon him, and he was writing his inimitable plays of special atmosphere, declared in a letter: "I want to write about men and women and the great forces that have been with them from their cradle up. . . . I merely set out to make a work of art out of a simple theme."

It is not too much, therefore, to insist that the one-act form — at its best — requires a workmanship which in some respects is more exacting than the longer play; and which, while it has to face certain problems similar to the longer form, has, by reason of its own nature, necessitated closer handling of materials. The numberless variations we get, in the multi-

tude of one-act plays published in a year, which are merely variations of the same theme, the infinite similarities of situation, the flat projection of figures rather than rounded character to carry the dialogue, the utilitarian purposes of the writers who forget the art in the restricted requirements of amateurs, who constitute the market for the one-act play — all these elements militate against the best development of a *genre* which has every possibility of attaining the highest pitch of dramatic effectiveness.

III

This matter of materials for the one-act play is an important one. Every dramatic season is witness to innumerable long plays which get produced, so thin in their substance, so slight in their story, that even skill in characterization will not conceal the poverty of their invention. "It should have been a one-act drama," we say to ourselves. This conclusion may be true and it may not. There may be elements in a theme thin under any condition other than a paragraph or a half-column. Of course, many one-act plays "get away with it" in just this sort of argument. And that is why there are so many half-creditable plays being written. There seems to be no realization that the materials for a one-act play, though they may be helped by the form — made more powerful, more striking, more consistent without padding — are supremely important to the play as a literary contribution, as a work of art. Our anthologies are flooded with small dramas for "men casts", for "women casts", for this occasion and that, showing that in a way the one-act play has taken the place of the old time recitation, and meets the requirements of an improved amateur actor. But the form is "aped"; it is, as the artist would say, "sheked"; the surface is smooth, but the skeleton is not there. It is clever, barring which it is dull, faulty. Percival Wilde, in his excellent treatise on "The Craftsmanship of the One-act Play", recognizes the vast life of the small play — not so different from its larger brother, but swifter, more exacting in its selective process; but he sees in both

processes similar ends: the effective utilization of raw materials. And the raw material must have substance, quality; it must be living substance.

Death and birth are swifter than the swiftest one-act play; they are so swift that they alone as subjects for a long drama would be beyond the human endurance of an audience. They are an incident and must be led up to with varying uses of materials for relief. There are crises in life, and they may be led up to by a skilled dramatist. Which is more effective: Maeterlinck's "The Intruder" or Eugene O'Neill's "The First Man?" The one has consummate emphasis while the other offends the nerves by rasping over-emphasis. Birth and death handled in different ways and different forms. The one-act play deals with culminations; if the first act of a long drama held the climax, the play would be over.

There are many subjects which cannot be treated swiftly; their potency would be missed, their interest for the spectator would be robbed, their very shortness would be so baffling as to deluge the reader or observer with more questioning doubts than the solution could satisfy. The writer must determine this fitness for himself, and, by his determination, he is partly judged: this and the execution are everything. Professor Frederick H. Koch confessed to me that he found difficulty in persuading his pupils at the University of North Carolina, who are writing plays dealing with the folklore of their hills and mountains, to use the long drama form. They seem to sense that the one-act play can best hold the intense tragedies of their people. Is this reticence on their part, is it a desire to seek practice in a form they can work over oftener until they gain surety? Or is it not the same impulse in them which is behind the balladist: elemental emotion is always seeking the quickest expression; when it is attenuated it loses fire and makes the play a mere exploitation of unusual condition, manners, and customs. The play then becomes folklore rather than folk passion, and we get what Poe contended he found in all long poems: "After passages of what we feel to be true poetry, there follows, inevitably, a passage of platitudes which no critical pre-judgment can force us to admire."

...ORD COLLEGE AND SEMINARY
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I do not contend that long plays cannot be made of such materials as these students are using; but I believe that their elemental passion is just as effective if used in the manner of Synge, if not more effective. Percy MacKaye's "This Fine-Pretty World", Lulu Vollmer's "Sun-Up" — and more particularly her "The Dunce Boy", Hatcher Hughes's "Hell-Bent for Heaven", Roscoe Brink's "Catskill Dutch", whatever their excellences in story and character, primarily exploited unusual locale and custom; and in each one of these plays there was a something precious, a something meticulous, which detracted from the big effect, which delayed the elemental passion for the sake of showing off its condition. A play of a single lyrical impulse is better for its terseness in exquisite form.

This impulse need not necessarily be a violent one: rather must it be intense: like lightning from a clear sky. Fate is ever at our elbow, the Greeks believed. Mr. Koch's student, who wrote the simple little mountain play, "The Return of Buck Gavin", naïvely came upon what he thought was a new discovery: but it was none the less true for being old. He wrote: "The dramatic is not the unusual. It is happening daily in our lives. Some of us, perhaps, toil on a mountain farm, and, when we relax from the stolidity of mind, and allow ourselves thought, it is to think bitterly on the unvaried, monotonous grind of our existence. Here is drama in the true sense."

Rather should he have said: Here is *material for drama* in the true sense. For it is only after the dramatist has chosen his theme, developed the passionate quality of his material, seen its reactions on living character, and then selected — through that quality in him which makes the dramatist — the essentials, that the drama itself is ready to be born.

IV

A few dates are necessary for our better understanding of the rise of the American one-act play. Its growth was probably hastened through conscious imitation and through

that social necessity which created the Little Theatre movement. The Abbey Theatre gave us the Irish one-act plays, and they went consciously to work to create a dramatic literature. They even issued a pamphlet of instructions, "Advice to Playwrights Who Are Sending Plays to the Abbey, Dublin." The movement fired the imagination, and those who came to see the little group, went away to write. "I asked Mr. Lennox Robinson," writes Lady Gregory, "how he had begun, and he said he had seen our players in Cork, and had gone away thinking of nothing else than to write a play for us to produce." It was only in 1899 that Yeats sent Synge about his significant job in the Aran Islands. There came to us in America many stories of the Free Theatre in France, of the Freie Buehne in Germany, of the generosity of Miss Horniman, first with the Irish Players and then with the Manchester Repertory Theatre, in 1907. Our pioneer Little Theatre was established in Boston, under the inspiration of Mrs. Lyman W. Gale, who had just witnessed the Irish Players on their first visit to America. The social settlements probably forestalled her in the actual establishment of a specialized theatre, but, as an independent entity, the Toy Theatre heads the story. Then there followed quickly the development of acting groups throughout the country; not prompted, as had been many dramatic clubs, by social impulse; not actuated by any such collegiate ambition as marked the Yale Dramatic Association, for example, which I like to link with the drama in the colleges of colonial times, — but moved by a growing discontent with the professional theatre under speculative management, and by a determination to bring to their communities something of the best that was being written by the European playwrights. Most notably (since they were not handicapped by the necessity for translation) these amateurs looked to the drama renaissance in England, the soil for which was first turned by Henry Arthur Jones, and Arthur Wing Pinero, and the Archer translations of Henrik Ibsen.

The professional theatre in America had not given any encouragement to the one-act play. As for that, neither had the

manager in England, except as a stop-gap. But, just as on the Continent and in Great Britain, the revolutionary groups sought a form which at first would not demand too supreme an effort, financially or from the point of view of acting, so in this country the one-act play was hailed and encouraged by the amateur for the Little Theatre. I take George Middleton and Percival Wilde as among the first writers to see the possibility of the form, and they were among the first to whom the amateurs turned.

The publishing of plays had just begun to be a habit. It was found that the literary quality, which was one of the excellent signs of drama renaissance in England, entitled a play to permanent and worthy printing. The old plays in quality had been about as poor as the quality of printing in the early Lacy and Samuel French editions. Now, a play was to be a book, a thing to be carefully read. Jones, always championing the freedom of the theatre — his "The Renascence of the English Drama" was written in 1894 — wrote a pamphlet on the reading of plays. It had wide circulation. It probably encouraged the libraries to give countenance to the purchasing of the play book. And this was furthered no doubt by the Drama League of America, called into being through the impulse of the Drama Club, of Evanston, Ill., in 1910. The League was only a sign of the times, as the Stage Society had been a sign of revolt in London; — fostering the "revolutionary" movement and organizing audiences for the support of worthy plays.

Thus began the craze for Little Theatres, and the increased demand for better material for the amateur actor. Thus started a revolt against the American Theatre, and a demand, through the wide reading of plays which educated a theatre audience for better acting drama, for a different playhouse. In the revolt we perforce went through a period of mad experiment, thoughtlessly throwing overboard everything to clear the decks for action. All the little art centres began furiously to work for the improvement of the theatre, for the encouragement of the dramatist, for higher forms of entertainment. The groups sprang up over night in the most unexpected quar-

ters: they drove saloons out and turned the space where once the bar had been into a stage; they sprouted on the wharf of Provincetown, Mass., in the agricultural colleges of the West. A mass of art feeling in this country sprung aleak, and overflowed Arizona, North Dakota, everywhere. The Rockies could not stem the tide which moved to the coast.

A community feeling was thus aroused. The Little Theatre was too small to hold it all. With the fervor of the prophet, Percy MacKaye began preaching the Civic Theatre, began doing the pageant work which accustomed whole cities to the joy of creation. The dawn of a new era had come. Like shopkeepers taking down their blinds to display their wares, educators took down their barriers, in this early dawning, and let the impulse in. Drama began to be taught in the schools and colleges. Professor George P. Baker, of Harvard, and others, began to desert lone courses in Shakespeare and Restoration drama, and to give thought to the living play, the current flowing through the contemporary playhouse.

The movement became an epidemic; its explanation was the desire for self-expression. There was no real depth of understanding to the activity. It was a new game. Yet the people were in the beginning using something which was fundamentally important to the future life of the theatre in America. They were utilizing something out of which a national development might arise, which still may arise in unexpected manner. W. B. Yeats was once asked to explain the object behind the Irish National Dramatic Society. He expressed it in these words:

Our movement is a return to the people . . . and the drama of society would but magnify a condition of life which the countryman and the artisan could but copy to their hurt. The play that is to give them a quite natural pleasure should either tell them of their own life, or of that life of poetry where every man can see his own image, because there alone does human nature escape from arbitrary conditions. Plays about drawing-rooms are written for the middle classes of great cities, for the classes who live in drawing-rooms, but if you would uplift the man of the roads you must write about the

roads, or about the people of romance, or about great historical people.

This fervor of Yeats was the fervor which directed also much of the impulse toward a new theatre in Great Britain at the time. It resulted in a narrow local sense, which was sincerely used and beautifully shaped, but was so lacking in universal impulse as to be limited in appeal. Robinson and Murray added to the Irish repertory, and were content to appeal to those of their environment. Miss Baker's "Chains" had a London suburban significance. Granville-Barker's "Waste" became more English politics than drama. J. O. Francis's "Change", despite its intellectual appeal of syndicalism, was too Welsh, too non-conformist for America. Githa Sowerby's "Rutherford and Son" and Stanley Houghton's "Hindle Wakes" were of a middle-class quality peculiar to a certain type of society. Yet these plays were born of the impulse Yeats defined. And we in America to-day are seeing the persistence of the movement which swept England a quarter of a century ago, when George Kelly writes "The Show-Off", dealing with West Philadelphia, Owen Davis gives us "Icebound", dealing with Maine, and Eugene O'Neill garners up his hatred of all New England in "Desire Under the Elms."

V

Many books have been written on the Little Theatre movement, and these emphasize the various reasons given by the many groups for their organizing and for their selection of repertories. Each group, in its history, shows variation, and yet withal similar mistakes and struggles for subsistence. It must be noted that in this amateur movement probably more money has been wasted in good intention and poor execution than the permanent results have warranted — permanent results as affecting the professional theatre. But these various centres have done, and are still doing, excellent work in advance of the wider opening of territory into which the regular theatre will eventually go. Even though at present

they do not seem powerfully to affect the professional theatre situation, they shed light in communities where light is sorely needed. They are attempting the artistic thing, prompted by artistic longing.

In the fifteen years which mark the Little Theatre life, positive results however have had their indirect effect on the professional theatre. From these amateurs have come the initial experiments in stagecraft; in the midst of these amateur groups there have developed playwrights and actors who later went forth into a larger sphere. The stages of these Little Theatres showed to the larger playhouse the practical application of new methods of lighting; they showed the real effectiveness of the philosophy of inner content which marked the aim of the foreign producers. The Washington Square Players created a group of playwrights; so did the Provincetown Theatre. There are volumes of one-act dramas to mark their community cohesion. In the Universities the same thing happened, and now we have Harvard Workshop plays and Yale Playcraftsmen plays, and books of dramas from Vassar, from North Dakota, from North Carolina. As their contribution, Stuart Walker (with his Portmanteau Theatre) and the Neighborhood Playhouse showed how stimulating it was to discover a dramatist, like Dunsany, whom the regular theatre tried to bribe away from the Little Theatre after they had given him a chance. The same was the case with O'Neill, who has entered a broader sphere of theatre life than the original Provincetown group had to offer, yet who owes to them, quite as much as they owe to him, the means of escaping the restrictions of a commercial theatre.

The word "little" has had much more stress put upon it than it deserves. That the theatres were little was due largely to the fact that the groups were little and could afford no more; that they were little made it possible for the amateurs to limit themselves to those productions suitable for a small stage. The one-act play seemed to be the natural outlet. And what we had at this time, illustrative of the form, was called forth by the demand. When the supply was not sufficient, the groups turned to the foreign plays. But, even

in those early days, the Little Theatre groups showed that their ambition tended toward the larger play. The Hull House Theatre presented Ibsen's "Pillars of Society" and Galsworthy's "The Silver Box", "Justice", and "The Pigeon", besides Shaw's "You Never Can Tell", "The Devil's Disciple", and "Arms and the Man." In comparison with the improved conditions which many of the groups have recently shown, the acting of such ambitious attempts may have then been crude. But none the less the amateurs even thus early dispelled the notion that the Little Theatre was wholly pledged to the one-act play.

Yet, even though certain groups developed beyond the crudeness of the amateur, and are still doing so — taking the place, in some communities, of the professional theatre, which seems at present to have cut the country at large out of any participation in the regular theatre's offering — there were so many more that could not advance out of their amateurishness that the one-act dramatist found a wide market for the good thing, even though it might be destined to be badly acted. Long before the professional theatre thought of showing the dramatist what possibilities for stage mounting the new scenery and the new directing offered him, thus broadening his creative horizon, the Little Theatre directors — notable among them, Sam Hume and Stuart Walker and the Misses Lewisohn — showed him what the possibilities were. The producing of such plays as those by Dunsany and O'Neill; the foreign theories of stage decoration as practised in the Little Theatre by Rollo Peters, Lee Simonson, and Robert Edmond Jones, encouraged the dramatist in his belief that the one-act canvas could be much more expansive than its compressed technique; might have an horizon as far as the stars, even though its technique must be reticent. Little Theatres gave their bills of one-act plays, mixing the American beginner with the foreign masterpiece: Schnitzler and Musset with Alice Gerstenberg; Maeterlinck and Andreyeff with Goodman; Tchekhov and Porto-Riche with Alice Brown; Molière and Strindberg with Philip Moeller. It was an excellent association. It primed the American dramatist in a

spirit of emulation, and sometimes of imitation. The results were satisfying.

Changes occurred swiftly in the personnel and character of the Little Theatre, and names, once prominent in its development, have given way to others in groups that have taken warning by the mistakes made by their predecessors. There is possibly more sound knowledge of theatre technique among certain amateur groups than there was at the outset. For the laboratory theatres have sent forth their students to do pioneer work, to lend their experience in establishing the good work in arid sections. From the North Carolina group has gone forth a prophet, imbued with belief in the soundness of using local materials, and he has started play writing in two States — Wyoming and Arizona — where the young dramatists draw native problems from the sections they know best.

One group which pioneered many movements and which proved of use to the Little Theatres was the Washington Square Players. They are no more, though the wraith of their being crops up now and again, and hovers over the flourishing Theatre Guild, of New York. Here is the grown child of amateur parentage; where wisdom developed in it first the spirit of semi-professionalism, and afterwards the spirit of full professionalism, though financially it is not so subject to the dictates of the accustomed theatre competition. From its infant days, the Theatre Guild has shown, through ups and downs in public confidence, a persistent spirit of experimentalism. And though now it has grown into a corporate body of large size, with several theatres to manage in New York — one given in trust by stockholders who have confidence in its record of the past and have faith in its aliveness — the Guild managers are example of what the Little Theatre in other communities might develop into under proper community encouragement.

But it is significant that since the Theatre Guild has come into the larger sphere of influence, it has deserted the field of the one-act play, save where it might come to the rescue to bolster up any undue shortness of a long play. Does this mean that these former devotees of the one-act play in their ama-

teur days are now showing that they too believe in the supposed weakness of the one-act drama as a professional theatre asset? Does it mean that they too are now of the belief that a bill of one-act plays, for the theatre audience that pays for its amusement, has not the unity of interest which a long play would create? Personally I believe that a bill of three one-act plays is prevented from being of general value just because it demands three separate shifts of attention on the part of an audience; three efforts of adjustment to different characters, different surroundings, and different stories. Such an entertainment as O'Neill's "S. S. Glencairn", which consists of a cycle of sea plays whose unity of mood is holding, is a different matter. Its unity of "mood" holds the plays together.

The one-act play in this country is therefore bound to be handicapped by the limited need for it in the professional theatre. It is discouraging to the playwright to have to appeal solely to the amateur, and to the schools and colleges. Yet he has the field of the printed page, if that contents him, which I doubt. George Middleton wrote, in one of his prefaces:

> These little plays were written for acting, but arranged for reading. Knowing how small an opportunity the professional stage in this country gives for the serious one-act drama so common on the Continent, they are modestly offered to those who see some dignity in the form, and who realize that certain dramatic ideas find their best expression in the concentrated episode. The growing demand, also, among readers, for plays, has encouraged the author to write these, and their unexpected publication in the magazines has prompted him to bring them together.

This was penned in 1911. Since then, Mr. Middleton has deserted the field, and turned to the larger form which the theatre demands.

The Little Theatre has proven its usefulness, and it is still functioning, but now more in the spirit of a community theatre than of an amateur experiment. The country is still dotted

with such groups, and there is an alertness to them which betokens eventual good. But they are none the less amateurs, and their menace is partly that emphasized some years ago by David Belasco, who is reported to have said: "While I believe in amateur acting organizations, and want them to exist and receive every encouragement, it is unwise so to praise their efforts as to turn their heads completely, until these play-acting actors really think they can act." The Belasco Cup, which he now offers the Little Theatres, in competition, suggests that he has modified his views somewhat. The standards of good acting have in truth been very much lowered in this country by the Little Theatre. But this is another story which has nothing to do with the playwright's work, except to discourage him, if he has written a good play, and has had the misfortune to see it given by a company of "play-boys" born in a bare room a few nights before.

VI

There are many worthy examples of the best type of one-act play written by Americans. In the initial years, George Middleton and Percival Wilde stood free of any particular groups, and wrote their plays for all who might want them. Their influence throughout the country on amateurs has therefore been wider than that of any other writers in the field. They were the first to develop an expertness in the use of materials, which showed that they understood the one-act play to be an art form with a peculiar technique. Wilde went farther than Middleton, because his belief in and fondness for the form were more sincerely deep-founded, more clearly understood. In the years to come we will have to accord Wilde the credit for having written a book on the technique based on a far-reaching belief in the infinite possibilities of the one-act play's effect. No one before him had so clearly, so broadly, so fairly stated the case of this *genre* of drama. For, after all, it is drama, and, besides its special technique, it has an underlying technique which is that of the theatre.

And it is just here that Wilde, always experimental in his

writing, is perhaps our most challenging exponent of the one-act form, even if he has not yet created as sharply as O'Neill in his early pieces, or as Susan Glaspell in "Trifles." He has shown the excellent use to which the form may be put in the writing of children's plays; he has shown it adaptable to realism, to fantasy, to symbolism. But his handicap — which keeps him from approaching the distinctiveness of Dunsany, of Synge, even of Barrie — is one for which he is not to blame: his aloofness from any passionate belief in or disbelief in life itself, at the present time one of the American dramatist's consuming limitations. If his social conscience was as great as his convictions regarding the technique of the one-act play, his little dramas would be more than varied clever stories, unerring at times in their dramatic arrangement, but never giving full outlet to whatever lyric passion they might contain. In so far as this is true, there is a note of artificiality about them, even in so affecting a piece as "Confessional." Recognizing that with Wilde, Middleton deserves the credit of being among the first to see in the one-act play a technique of its own, I have never been able to see in his ideas — supposedly advanced social ideas — the virility claimed for them. When they have come to the point of assertion, they have always fallen short, both in their psychology complex and their human effectiveness. Here Wilde is more subtle, as when one compares his "A Question of Morality" with Middleton's "A Good Woman."

The play in its short form has been used effectively to illustrate many points. Rita Wellman's "Funiculi Funicula" and Alfred Kreymborg's "Lima Beans" are opposites both in technique and in spirit; they call for different types of acting. Delicacy of treatment in such pieces as Alice Brown's "Joint Owners in Spain" (pointing to the fact that she was not unmindful of Lady Gregory's "The Workhouse Ward"); sharpness of satire in George Cramm Cook and Susan Glaspell's "Suppressed Desires"; a certain brilliant cleverness in the comedy handling of Philip Moeller's "Helena's Husbands" (showing somewhat a young man's imitation of Shaw); the sincerity of Lewis Beach's treatment in "The

Clod"; the charm and fancy in Stuart Walker's "Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil" — these alone are indication of the variety and the skill of the one-act play writers. Of course many rush in who have neither the dramatic sense nor the technical aptness, and they either create obscurely or put into dialogue material which is unfitted to the drama form. Such poetic obtuseness as one finds in Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Aro da Capo" leaves one in confusion; such incidental materials as underlie the work of Christopher Morley, measure how easily one may misinterpret the function of the one-act form. Our anthologies, compiled with haste oftentimes, bring together a clutter of this material, and the extensive sales of these books suggest that they find ready market with the amateur, whose discrimination is still not what it should be, and who is easily led astray.

The one-act play is a form that tempts every type of writer. A theatre manager, Arthur Hopkins, writes "Moonshine"; a college professor, Jeannette Marks, has gone afield to do her Welsh dramas; a poet of the road, Harry Kemp, establishes for a while a theatre of his own for his own one-act pieces; journalists, editors, novelists have all dropped casually into the form with varying success. But not one of them has created distinctively — merely adequately and to the satisfaction of the amateur, whose criterion is simplicity of background and ease of acting. The plain kitchen of the farmhouse, a crowded tenement living-room, the side room off a saloon, a park bench in the high light, with surrounding darkness — the more stark the scene, the wider the appeal to the amateur. This constant practical reminder has probably served to keep the mind of the dramatist a little circumscribed. For the average writer of the small plays has little native impulse to fall back on; he imitates what he has read, reproduces what he has heard second hand, is not moved by sincerity so much as by cleverness.

I do not wish to suggest that sincerity is not a mark of much of the material in the one-act play form. It comes unexpectedly every year: in published collections, in Little Theatre Tournaments. John W. Rogers's "Judge Lynch" has

this quality uppermost. And the same quality is dominant in most of the plays written in class under the direction of Professor Koch, at the University of North Carolina. But if there is not the underlying nearness of the dramatist to his material, then there is bound to be imitation. This does not mean that similarity of theme or situation between plays is a direct plagiarism of one or the other. The dramatist's mind is open to the barest suggestion. It may be that Miss Brown had been reading "The Workhouse Ward" when she thought of her "Joint Owners in Spain"; it may be that O'Neill's "Anna Christie" set Percival Wilde's mind in the direction of "The Luck Piece." Undoubtedly Owen Davis, when he came to write his long plays, "The Detour" and "Icebound", set about the task with his eye on O'Neill. But similarities are oftentimes coincidences. Koch calls attention to a play written by one of his students, Paul Greene's "The Last of the Lowries", which parallels Synge's "Riders to the Sea", in one case the North Carolina law claiming the mother's sons, in the other the sea demanding its terrific toll.

VII

We have had many instances of the one-act play appearing later as a longer drama. Clyde Fitch dashed off a one-act sketch which he called "The Harvest", written on the train between New York and Boston. It became the second act of "The Moth and the Flame." It is said that James Forbes's "The Chorus Lady" and Eugene Walter's "The Easiest Way" both started as sketches. Ernest Howard Culbertson turned his one-act, "Goat Alley", into a long play. And the recent example of skilled transforming is George Kelly's "The Show-Off", which had served as a successful vaudeville sketch, called "Poor Aubrey." These exceptions prove no case against the inadequacy of the one-act form to be a thing in itself. They merely indicate how themes often slip into the short lengths that could easily be made otherwise. Nor in thus analyzing the qualities of the true one-act drama am I attempting to exalt it above its real value.

Any art form is vital when it is supremely used — if the form is perfect; if there pulses in it the thing we call life, which makes it throb and move others by its movement; if it completes its emotion beautifully, with a clean-cut finish. It may be a one-act play or a three-act drama. It is a supreme asset in either case. But the unfortunate thing is that there is little encouragement for the skilled playwright to devote his best talents where only the Little Theatres will make use of them. The one-act play must be a side-issue with him, and he must look to the printed page for its wide appeal. Only when such a movement as the Irish Theatre created a "school", was there a justification for their poets to write the one-act plays which are among our best examples of the form. If some theatre organization of like character should ever arise in this country, there would be a similar response among our dramatists. Now, the form is used haphazardly by the writer, unless it happens that, writing in class, he is told about the Irish Players and is advised to go and do likewise out of his own soil.

The Little Theatre and the one-act play have through a necessity been drawn closely together. The Little Theatre has passed its stage of experiment in one direction; it now faces a period of experiment in another. Where once it helped in the break away from the conventional manager, now its community significance and experimental character are making it a valuable advance-agent in the theatre's spread throughout the country. Some of these theatres, like those in Dallas, Texas, and New Orleans, La., might almost be considered semi-professional, since they have trained directors, make use of the latest devices for stage illusion, and are well versed in the latest theories of stagecraft. Such standards as are maintained by the group in New Orleans, which calls itself Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré, seem to satisfy more than a mere band of amateurs. If only there was closer connection between these theatres, all working for the good of the larger theatre, some quicker results might follow — results which allowed the professional actor to appear through the country, rather than to confine himself to the highly competitive lights of Broadway.

But here again, when the Little Theatre becomes semi-professional in its technique, it seems to desert the one-act form. It desires wider scope for an evening's entertainment, rather than for a half hour. It wants also to keep up with Broadway and to bring to its own people what the Broadway manager has not yet shown an eagerness to bring on his own speculation. The one-act play drops again to a third position for its maintenance. It has to remain close to the channel where it finds its greatest demand. This is unfortunate for, as I have tried to suggest, it is capable of the highest development. What its future will be depends on whether there is a social demand for it. Such craftsmanship as Charles Rann Kennedy gave to his "The Terrible Meek" and "The Chastening" is worthy the closest study; the plays themselves are worthy the highest acting. They are not exacting as to scene, and they can be slipped into the smallest auditorium. There was much in Stuart Walker's Portmanteau Theatre scheme, which he seems to have deserted for the stock theatre experiments he has been carrying on for many seasons in the middle West. Like the interlude, it could be slipped in at the opportune moment. I believe the one-act play could be raised, in its execution — both in the writing and in the acting — to professional requirement, and taken inexpensively to communities where the regular theatre is never seen or heard of. This is a large country, and the playhouse has barely pricked its surface. It is only in New York that the night time is pierced by a million candles.

In the meanwhile, the one-act drama is a useful adjunct to the larger theatre, even though the larger theatre gives it a cold hand. For, in the form, the playwright may find himself, may develop his technique, may study closely the exquisite rhythmic interaction of the thing we call a play, no matter what its size may be.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Eugene O'Neill and the "New" Drama

I

The American Drama has to its credit many examples of those pleasant accidentals, which are hard to account for, since they spring to light unexpectedly, and are difficult to attach to any broad mental tendency or any personal conviction. A careful analysis of the commercial theatre will bring to view two positive and excellent results of the box-office demand: the theatre manager of the Frohman era stabilized the theatre business, and demanded a more or less standardized drama. Though the dramatist found it necessary to obey the dictates of a speculative business, he had to give a care to the technique of his product; had to see that the parts worked smoothly — were, in the theatre sense, "actor fit." If he had an idea which seemed salable, and his script was not of standard parts, the manager had usually a "play doctor" in the offing, who could snip here and paste there, until the play became articulate, well rounded, producible, and effective. The box-office school of drama, with the slogan, "Give the public what it wants", turned out some excellent mechanicians, and the technical quality of the American Drama became vastly improved.

There were several attempts to teach technique to the aspiring dramatists in correspondence courses, and Professor Baker's "Workshop 47", at Harvard, was founded on the same practical plan that our schools of journalism are: certain problems could be studied, certain architectural rules could

be mastered, certain writing could be done, which might send a playwright far along the road toward success, without the painful process of learning his trade by being rejected by managerial office after managerial office. In other words, it was during the box-office régime that the technique of the drama became a self-conscious matter with the playwrights. Benefit came from this. One only has to compare the plays of the eighteen-eighties with those of the eighteen-nineties to see how much more superior the latter are than the former. The technique was perfected through many processes of elimination and reconstruction. The actor had a hand in it, the director, — every one, in fact, who attended rehearsal. Oftentimes, the poor author found himself completely snowed under, his title changed, his characters shifted, his motives twisted. But none the less a workable play was the result. He learned much in the agonizing process.

The accidentals of which I speak were born of this period. They were manipulated before they saw stage light, but they had the advantage of being fundamentally conceived for themselves alone. They were signs of what the dramatist might do in an atmosphere of independence rather than of expediency. But, as an illustration that the theatre of the time was exacting and numbing, these accidentals were never followed up by anything as good; they were hopeful signs that blossomed and dropped out of sight. They were nurtured for a while by such societies as local Drama Leagues, and were referred to as theatre successes of an artistic kind, too good for box-office success. How many times the cry was raised, "This is the American Drama." How many times we prophecied the sweep of the stage with a new form of art. The box-office standard, however, stood by; the economic theatre dampened our ardor by declaring that these plays could not draw enough to pay the rent. On their first appearance, such dramas as Moody's "The Great Divide", Sheldon's "Salvation Nell" and "The Nigger", Eleanor Gates's "The Poor Little Rich Girl", Eugene Walter's "The Easiest Way", MacKaye's "The Scarecrow", Benrimo and Hazelton's "The Yellow Jacket", and Langdon Mitchell's "The New York Idea", were

prophecied to herald a new dramatic era. But, somehow, outside of initial cleverness and technical dexterity, nothing happened and nothing followed. We never got the true Moody play — originally called "The Sabine Woman" — because Henry Miller pared it for fear its theme would be too strong for the taste that showed itself at the box-office window. Sheldon became a serviceable playwright for the actress looking for parts, and his ill-health soon removed him from the active field. Eleanor Gates flashed forth once with a dream product that hinted at a possible emulation of Barrie. Walter, author of many expert melodramas, seems to have touched the bed-rock of his life's philosophy, in "The Easiest Way", and to have had little more to say. His expertness in the standardized technique was undisputed, but he was willing to abide by the formula of the "punch", the "big situation." "The Yellow Jacket" had a dire struggle to make ends meet. The "lovers of art" stood by it, formed rescue parties to keep it on the boards, and Charles Coburn was loyal to it for many seasons. But the authors had had enough of themes poetic, fantastic, exotic. They did not try it again. Mr. Mitchell gave us a high comedy in "The New York Idea" that has not staled with the years, that contains a universal smartness to it, an ironical depth to it, which fashions have not thus far outdated. But, evidently, he has not cared to subject himself to the dictates of the managerial system, for he has not been heard from in dramatic form for many years.

Thus, our survey could run in other channels, where the dramatist has created well, according to the formula set by the manager, and then dropped from the reckoning, either discouraged or else turning to the moving picture. Within my memory, I recall the enthusiastic reception of such pieces as Edward Locke's "The Climax", A. E. Thomas's "Her Husband's Wife", Charles Kenyon's "Kindling", Fred Ballard's "Believe Me, Xantippe" and "Young America." Was it that they had done the trick once or twice, and could not make it work again? Or was it that the demands of the box-office ruled them out so completely that, rather than prostitute their best efforts, they decided to "farm" in other quarters?

Then, suddenly, something happened in the theatre. A new breath of life blew through the open door. The spirit of reform began to undermine the commercial manager's grip. This change came not from the theatre itself but from outside. It did not directly challenge the theatre at first, but began an insidious propaganda among those whose money flowed through the box-office. The publishing of plays found a yearly increasing reading public, whose taste for the better thing began to be whetted. Independent producing groups — amateurs to be sure, but potential entities later to develop into such organizations as The Theatre Guild and the Provincetown Players — began to challenge the commercial manager on his own ground.

The Little Theatre development had a beneficial effect upon the theatre, even though it was not professional. It first of all encouraged the new scenic artist; it next encouraged experiments in play writing without thought of box-office standards; it then roused the interest of the actor who had long been suffering under stereotyped conditions. The magazines began to publish articles on the "new" theatre, the "new" drama, the "new" producer. Foreign experiment took hold of youthful students who went abroad and sat at the feet of Gordon Craig and Max Reinhardt. Just as Ibsen seeped through the conventional theatre, so the other foreign dramatists seeped through the book world, and the public became familiar with playwrights who had had little chance of being seen in the "old" theatre.

I do not believe that, even to-day, after the spirit of reform has actually ploughed its way along the "hardened" theatre centre of New York, the "old" commercial manager knows yet what has happened to him. He still looks with wonder at the success of the Theatre Guild. He sees that the kind of drama, known as the "box-office model", while it still pays, has a rival that also pays. If he is now doing the better thing, it is not because of conviction but emulation. The strange thing is that there seems to be a feeling among the dramatists, who received their training under the old régime, that they can do the "new stunt" as well as the younger man.

There is something more to the fostering of good drama than mere improvement of technique. And yet, the writing of a play from the "box-office" standard has proven financially so attractive, that a great part of the drama effort has been a matter of trying to hit the bull's eye, rather than to embody in a play some conviction or to stamp a play with individuality. On the latter score, it is surprising how much of a kind the American Drama is. The slight difference between George Broadhurst's "Bought and Paid For", Bayard Veiller's "Within the Law", and Eugene Walter's "Paid in Full" is a matter of differing incident. They are of the same cloth. And Cleves Kincaid's "Common Clay" shows that even Harvard's Workshop 47 used to uphold the box-office pattern.

The point is that the theatre has proven an attractive gamble, a cardboard game, where novelty has been the catchword. Much of our effort has gone in that channel and proven highly effective. Only a few of our dramatists have taken the trouble to be loyal to their personal point of view. Their individuality has been lost in the shuffle. There are identifying marks to George Cohan and to Frank Craven; there is a light ease to Clare Kummer that makes her comedy recognizable. But the realism of Arthur Richman in "Ambush" and of Gilbert Emery in "The Hero" is not highly individualized; it is a formula applied to a differing story.

When it comes to a study of the more recent drama, which is of the old type and which yet embodies certain contemporaneous interests, it is a matter of reading individual plays and then seeing where they will fit into an artificial scheme of classification. Lewis Beach, with his "Square Peg" and "The Goose Hangs High", goes into the realistic cubby-hole; Zoë Akin, imitator of Pinero in "Declassé", flirts with half-baked romantic situations and abhors idea. Jesse Lynch Williams, with a certain condescension toward the theatre, not unusual in the literary man, takes a blue print of Shaw's "Getting Married" and plays cleverly with his own "Why Marry?" and "Why Not?" One can pile up a roster of names representing a great extravagance of effort, with little permanent and valuable precipitate worthy a period beyond box-

office serviceableness. Don Marquis's "Old Soak" does not make him a dramatist: the character is no whit more memorable than the Undertaker in Harry James Smith's "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh" or the ne'er-do-well father in Edith Ellis's "Mary Jane's Pa." Zona Gale has juggled with dramatic cleverness in "Miss Lulu Bett", which, for some unaccountable reason, was awarded the Pulitzer Drama Prize for 1921. But the conditions that prompt the Award Committee for that prize are always strange. First of all, their decisions may be overridden, as in the case of Hatcher Hughes's "Hell-Bent for Heaven", which took the prize, in 1924, despite the fact that the verdict was for George Kelly's "The Show-Off." The play selected for 1925 was Sidney Howard's "They Knew What They Wanted", when there was Laurence Stallings' "What Price Glory" which, for originality, social effectiveness, and power, was far more deserving.

The hit-and-miss method of our theatre has not, therefore, produced any playwright of large proportion. In that respect it has been wasteful; it has asked for compromises, and, when these have not been made, it has frozen out attempts at originality. It created a formula for farce-comedy as it did for musical comedy; it demanded a stereotyped dramatization of novels and a stereotyped adaptation of the foreign play. Some men, starting out with an idea that the theatre is a place for ideas, are quickly shaped into the serviceable adjunct of the theatre. George Middleton and Guy Bolton — making ample money — submerge themselves; Robert Housum writes a refreshing piece, "The Gypsy Trail", and is not heard of afterwards. William De Mille writes "Strongheart" and "The Woman", and then turns to the moving picture; Thompson Buchanan writes "A Woman's Way", and then becomes editor of scenarios for a screen corporation.

With all this effort, it would seem that something more permanent would have been forthcoming to indicate the firm presence of an American Drama. We speak of "our latest supply" of playwrights with some justification. The young men and women of talent who can produce one success are being born every day; they are incubating in our college

workshops; every Little Theatre group hopes to emulate the Neighborhood Playhouse that encouraged Dunsany, and the Provincetown group that fostered O'Neill. In all soils, dramatic seeds are dropped, and the playwright springs forth. But they all get immediately too close to the theatre. They break into the theatre, having a "tip" as to how the "thing" is done. Men like Winchell Smith, E. C. Carpenter, Samuel Shipman are rarely away from Broadway; they watch the market and hurry their wares along at the slightest veer of popular taste. Yet, Carpenter's "Pipes of Pan" pointed to a talent he might have nurtured, if he had not misinterpreted the theatre's function. There is something exciting in watching the dramatic cat jump. A young man on a cattle ranch thinks he can write a play; another young man in a State Legislature has the same conviction. They rush to Harvard — now, I suppose they will rush to Yale, since Professor Baker has a new field to conquer with the Harkness endowment. At an agricultural college a playwright elects to write a play, the central plot of which is rivalry in hog growing; in the mountains of North Carolina, a girl recalls a family feud and puts it into dialogue form. There is activity in every quarter, but there is sadly wanting any basic foundation. Every one seems to be writing plays on the slimmest intellectual capital. It is a condition to be deplored that men possessing the clever dexterity of Avery Hopwood should not use the theatre in other ways; having made a sufficient income, that they should not give pause to their social responsibility in the theatre. Such men still persist, even though the conditions which shaped the "box-office theatre" are changing. I am not pleading that there is no room for the theatre piece of the universal appeal of Frank Bacon's "Lightnin'", though I believe that a more deeply conceived "Lightnin'" might have outlasted even Frank Bacon. The reason why we are seeing no productions of "Rip Van Winkle" is not because we can countenance no other *Rip* but Joseph Jefferson. One has only to read the different dramatic versions of Irving's story to understand why such trivialities disappear. But the theme is still available.

The real charge against our playwrights has been that they have brought to the theatre nothing more than their willing selves, and a varyingly dexterous pencil. The theatre has handled them as investments. "Anything for a production", has been the slogan. I recall the mention, with bated breath, that one of the conditions Eugene Walter exacted from David Belasco, at the time negotiations were in progress for the production of "The Easiest Way", was that not a word should be changed. Marvel of marvels — in an era when it was a wise playwright indeed who could recognize his play at all on the "first night." The strange thing is that the modern dramatist has come forward with what he supposed was a novelty, not knowing how plentiful were the playwrights of the past who wrote upon the same themes. There was much talk in years gone by of Harvey O'Higgins and Harriet Ford's "Polygamy"; but Thomas Dunn English's "The Mormons" was produced in 1858. Sheldon's "The Nigger" recalls Boucicault's "The Octoroon." The later technique is better; the situations possibly more tense. But the later product is not any the better in its inner content.

II

The "new" spirit that came into the theatre was not brought there by any initiative on the part of the American dramatist. It came through artistic emulation of foreign models on the part of easel painters, who saw the significance of the art revolution, and went abroad to become exponents of the latest theories of color and design. They were a happy, care-free crowd of young men, who suddenly began making scenery for our theatres, introducing reticence, color, balance, beauty. With a certain elfish delight, they put into practice the philosophy of the new art of decoration, claiming that what really mattered in the theatre was the inner content, the dominating mood. They plagued the managers of the commercial theatre with their brilliant designs, smacking of the Russians, imitative of the Germans; they flung inveigling combinations of colors on the walls of out-of-the-way res-

taurants. The poor, ignorant, old-time manager began to feel that what at first seemed prattle had some semblance of reason about it; but, instead of employing the new artist immediately, he tried to imitate the "new" art with meaningless bad taste and incongruous effects. There was enough of the showman's novelty in the "new" scenery to intrigue the old showman.

These young men of the decoration became the Peter Pans of our theatre; they were like children rushing into a stale room with a handful of freshly picked daisies. With the audacity of youth, they flung open the windows of the theatre, and flung out, as useless, the gaudy back drops of a past age, the stock sets suited to any and all plays. "We'll have no more of these," they exclaimed. "You mustn't manufacture scenery by contract, you mustn't piece together a play that has a soul," they declared. "You must fondle it, urge it into life, yield to its spiritual meaning. For it is a most delicate thing, — the mystery we call a play." This was a strange message that sifted in through the box-office. What did these wild artists mean by saying that drama had a mood, an atmosphere of its own? They demanded a readjustment of the elements that went into a production. The designer, the actor, the electrician must blend together under the creative wand of the stage director; while the latter must have the intelligence, the insight to make everything under his control bring out in the play every tendril of meaning, every flash of beauty, every throb of life in the text.

These new scene painters just happened accidentally upon the theatre, as a child in the nursery happens upon a picture book. They began as easel artists, who suddenly came within the spell of Gordon Craig, the wilful boy of the theatre, who, when all has been told — about his playing "Hamlet" with screens, about his wanting to abolish the actor from the stage, about his belief in the wordless play — really has stated in his books — however peculiarly — the true magic of the theatre. These Americans did not, as might at first be thought, swallow whole the theories of Reinhardt in Germany, Appia in Austria, or Stanislavsky and Bakst in Russia. They were merely

inspired by the energy with which theatre art abroad was revolutionizing the inner content of the play, the unity with which it was conceived, the fulness with which it was interpreted, and the worthwhileness of the plays accepted by the managers. The theatre was taking on a new meaning. These young men, quickened and enthusiastic, returned home.

And what did they see? An American Theatre without sensitiveness, with no direct aim or object; every one in it trying to attract attention: the scenery yelling to be looked at; the actor temperamentalizing all over the stage and murdering both enunciation and gesture; the costumer arraying the players as though they were so many manikins in costly silks and satins — an animated Fifth Avenue parade; the playwright pandering to cheap taste, with an eye on the royalty statement. These artists lay the blame for this deadened theatre to methods employed by the commercial manager. They dubbed the old methods as "Scenery of the Frohman Era"; they shook their heads over the Belasco realism. It was not that Frohman and Belasco had not done their part in the history of the American Theatre, but the artists knew that the philosophy of stagecraft which they had just fathomed offered to them a theatre of greater significance, of greater beauty, of more subtle appeal. With such a theatre, the new playwright would become heartened.

Like all new movements, the practitioners immediately fell into excesses; at first it seemed as though the "new" art was as anxious for publicity as the old realism; there was so much of the bizarre for the eye to see that the new scenery was quite as distracting as the minute details so dear to the heart of David Belasco. But, when Reinhardt first sent over his production of "Sumûrun", when the Ballet Russe showed us the vitality of the human form against a highly patterned background, when Bakst gave us new designs and combinations of color, when Granville-Barker illustrated that Shakespeare could possess new moods in the same situations, then we suddenly saw that our theatre was missing its true life.

The truth is we were sated with the McChesney cloakrooms, the Potash offices, the Auctioneer second-hand stores, the

Wallingford broker offices, the Childs' restaurants of our stage. Yet, our playwrights and producers had been frittering away their energies in giving us these "toys" to look at. The new scenic artists, represented by such men as Robert Edmond Jones, Lee Simonson, Rollo Peters, Sam Hume, Norman Bel-Geddes, John Wenger and others, preached their gospel in print, practised it wherever the "hardened" theatre would give them a chance. Slowly they advanced beyond the limits of the amateur theatre into the professional field, until now they have their place in the "awakened" playhouse of the present. The old manager had to learn the new terms. A new conviction was abroad that the theatre is a place for beauty, for design, for color, for imagination, for plays with spiritual content, for interpretation, for harmony of many parts, for a certain kind of poetry. These young men undoubtedly unlocked the doors of the old theatre and took the keys away from the janitors. It is they, and not the American playwrights, who have probed new vistas. They have shown that poetry need not be banished from the stage; they have indicated by practical architectural design that the proscenium stage need not limit the imagination of the dramatist or producer; they have indicated that a line of footlights need not hem in a play and keep it from contact with the audience. This was not an initiative on their part; they had seen abroad what they now determined to adapt to American condition. Without the Continental stage producer, they might have remained easel painters. Abroad, they saw what the live theatre was doing for the producer and the playwright. Once more, and in a new direction, the American Theatre was to be subject to foreign influence. The vigor with which they attacked the problems at home was typically American, but the fundamental note was borrowed. Thus far the Theatre Guild is dominated by the foreign note. If Reinhardt found in Norman Bel-Geddes the man he wanted for the gigantic production of "The Miracle", it was a recognition of that daring amplitude which marks so many American undertakings. An examination of the Bel-Geddes designs for a contemplated production of Dante's "Inferno" will reveal the

same quality. But the American note has not yet been found in the "new" theatre scheme of things. So, it does not surprise us that whatever "new" has been attempted in play writing, has received its initial inspiration from abroad.

III

Eugene O'Neill confesses as much in his own case. He says specifically: "We have endured too much from the banality of surfaces. Strindberg knew and suffered with our struggle years before many of us were born. He expresses it by intensifying the method of his time and by foreshadowing both in content and form the methods to come. All that is enduring in what we loosely call 'expressionism' — all that is artistically valid and sound theatre — can be clearly traced back through Wedekind to Strindberg's 'Dream Play', 'There Are Crimes and Crimes', 'The Spook Sonata', etc."

Whatever there is in O'Neill of the symbol of life, of the moral urge, of the pessimistic, has not been taken from but has been influenced by such sources. O'Neill is the sole example, in American Drama of the present, of the man who has been utterly divorced from the influences that have governed the theatre of Broadway for three decades. He has never looked toward the old manager for his existence as a dramatist, but has pursued his own way, has given vent to his own personal feeling, has drawn from his own narrow and sharp experience, not caring whether or not the theatre accepted him. He has therefore wrung from a rather surprised following a loyalty that has no counterpart in the history of the American Drama. There has been a peculiar fascination to his pessimism, for it is a darkness richly fraught with a haunting quality of poetry; there has been a romantic vigor to his personal history that has somehow crept into everything he has so far done, and has given it an autobiographical value. There is no unconcern shown by O'Neill in his creating; it is very much part of him, built on a scale which measures his interest in the unseen forces, shaping (or should we say destroying?) existence. His eye has been largely on the side of the world's

Photo Nickolas Muray, New York

PERCY MACKAYE

EUGENE O'NEILL

The one paved the way for the present American Drama; the other is paving the way for the future American Drama.

injustice, on the side of the underdog, as against the shams and social inequalities of the limited life he has seen. O'Neill became playwright with something to say, and he has gone down into the depths of a personal bitterness, which is felt in all of his plays — a bitterness with a relentless negation, which has its romantic sides.

His success has been wrung from the most unprepossessing surroundings. A band of devoted followers — who now seem to be capitalizing his victory, and whom we fear are keeping him circumscribed in his interests — gave him the opportunity to prove the effectiveness of his first essayals in drama — one-act plays of the sea. The Provincetown Players may always boast that they had faith in O'Neill when the regular theatre would have nothing to do with him. In their ill-lighted, crude playhouse, they produced for a select audience these haunting little dramas, which began to be talked of outside, until O'Neill became a much discussed hero of his own experiences. A saga grew up around him, and young playwrights began to wonder whether it were not well for all beginners to run away to sea in order to escape the humdrum of conventional life.

Here was a man who had filled his mental note-book with all sorts of rough pictures of unconventional humanity. He had been an ordinary seaman in the forecastle, he had been an able seaman on an American liner. He had braved an irate father, he had suffered parental punishment, a lonely figure living on a pittance in New London, Connecticut. He had faced a long illness, with the dread of its final conquest. Then, in a small room, eking out an infinitesimal income by reporting on a local newspaper, he had made his first attempts to put into play form some of the rebellion, some of the superstition, some of the rough-hewn poetry of the life below deck.

I have called attention many times to the way this experience of O'Neill's paralleled the experience of John Masefield. But there was a great difference between the two men. Bitterness had eaten into O'Neill until it colored his entire viewpoint of life. "The Hairy Ape" is the very epitome of that bitterness. There are certain conditions which shape souls

EUGENE GLADSTONE O'NEILL (1888–)

See Moses' "Representative American Dramas: National and Local"; also O. Sayler's "Our American Theatre."

Beyond the Horizon.	Produced, 1920.	
The Emperor Jones.	Produced, 1920.	
Anna Christie.	Produced, 1921.	
The Hairy Ape.	Produced, 1922.	
Welded.	Produced, 1924.	
S. S. Glencairn.	Produced, 1924.	
All God's Chillun Got Wings.	Produced, 1924.	
Desire Under the Elms.	Produced, 1925.	
Eugene O'Neill, the American Playwright.	By Oliver Sayler.	In "Our American Theatre." New York: Brentano, c. 1923.
The Playwright Unbound: Eugene O'Neill.	By Thomas H. Dickinson.	In "Playwrights of the New American Theatre." New York: Macmillan. 1925.
Eugene O'Neill — A Study.	By Barrett H. Clark.	In "A Study of the Modern Drama." New York: Appleton. 1925.
Eugene O'Neill.	By Ernest Boyd.	In "Portraits: Real and Imaginary." New York: Doran. 1924.
Eugene O'Neill.	By Clayton Hamilton.	In "Conversations on Contemporary Drama." New York: Macmillan. 1924.
Eugene O'Neill.	By Hugo von Hofmannsthal.	*Freeman*, 7: 39–41, March 21, 1923.
Eugene O'Neill.	By Walter P. Eaton.	*Theatre Arts Magazine*, 4: 286–289, 1920.

so that they do not fit anywhere. O'Neill has more than once faced such conditions. But bitter though he might be, he saw a certain grim beauty in the humanity he chose to deal with in his plays. Unmasked, bared to the soul, raw life surging in emotion, roaring with hate, instinct with sex, calm with the exhaustion of spent blasphemy, living to the full a life of energy — hating, loving, lusting, wasting away with disease — the people whom O'Neill chose to depict were primal. There was no sophistication about them. Life is a force bursting all bounds, in the O'Neill dramas. If life is limited, at that point O'Neill's bitterness eats its way. Outward condition became a hindrance, except in so far as it suggested the inward state. Realistic though some of his scenes may be, that realism is merely a fictitious thing; it is intended as a symbol of an inward state. The one naturalistic play he has written — "Anna Christie" — is the one play of his in which he has small interest. Its success was based on its evident qualities; its only values to O'Neill are the elements in it the casual observer fails to see. There is the untamed in O'Neill; there is seething in him the tragic color of humanity unexpressed. He is striving always to give expression to this thing unexpressed. To the casual dramatist, love is a matter of the meeting of lips; to O'Neill, love is a thing between souls — undisturbed by the outward faithless lapses of two beings. The poetry he tried to suggest in "Welded" is of a different quality from that which the conventional poet finds in "Tristan and Iseult" or "Francesca da Rimini." Such a situation as that in "Welded" appeals to him.

It is this highly individualistic attitude on the part of O'Neill which has won for him a recognition abroad. In that respect he is doing now what Whitman and Poe did before him. He is adding a new note to American letters and carrying it beyond national boundaries. Of all our playwrights, O'Neill is to-day best known in England, France, Germany, and Russia.

After his Harvard study — and Professor Baker confessed that he never had a more apt pupil — O'Neill wrote with a haunting imagination about the sea. "The Moon of the Caribbees", "Bound East for Cardiff", "The Long Voyage

Home", and "In the Zone" were a cycle whose unity was not wholly felt until in later years they were given together under the binding title of "S. S. Glencairn", — grim little canvases, as definite in mood as Dunsany's plays, though not as faultlessly constructed. O'Neill seems restless under too strict a limitation of technique. He bends his form to his purpose, not always with best results, not always with clearness, not always with unity of impression. He has not yet found himself in the difficult task he has set, often mixing realistic details with expressionistic symbols. He confesses himself that this mixture was partly the reason for the failure on the stage of "Welded."

But there are other limitations to O'Neill, due to the limited segment of life he has experienced and has thus far portrayed. He is an uncompromising dramatist. He'll not even acknowledge that problems stated on paper fail in effectiveness because they are not possible of reconciliation with life as it is lived in so-called civilized communities. He writes his plays, not in the hope that they will find acceptance, but because he is interested in them. "All God's Chillun Got Wings" is a study in racial intermarriage between the Negro and the white. It is a special case, not a general solution; but, as a special case, it is none the less against the sympathy of even the most liberal observer, because it has against it a whole series of ethnological proofs. Such a case as O'Neill depicts exists. That's all he claims: he has taken the special case; he has tried to analyze the black mind under these conditions, as he analyzed the black folklore superstition in "The Emperor Jones." But the cases are different, because, in the latter play — which is a superlative example of a one-act unity under the guise of a seven-scene development — one does not get a social problem fraught with irreconcilable oppositions, but a racial panorama, effective, enlightening, and poetically true. In this respect O'Neill becomes unwittingly a realist: a naturalistic depiction of the forces of Nature in their unmoral workings is at the bottom of "All God's Chillun Got Wings." Granting its fundamental wrongness, first as a piece of art and then as a correct study of causes and

effects, the play then becomes a striking example of wasted statement. What is supposed to be a tragedy demanding of sympathy, is a tragedy with a whole line of misplaced and unnatural instincts. It is difficult to believe that there are whites longing to be black. DuBois's "Souls of Black Men" illustrates that the other way round is much truer and much more demanding of the white man's sympathy. O'Neill's irony in "All God's Chillun Got Wings" is not sufficiently effective to counteract the defects here suggested.

But, as I have said, O'Neill does not care for acceptance. He rides over everything in his uncompromising way. He stamps out life as though it were a sort of conflagration. If he has a hatred, he lets it consume him. His detestation of New England has flamed dull red in "Beyond the Horizon" and "Desire Under the Elms." In these he becomes as much a special pleader as does Sinclair Lewis in "Main Street." Youth has its minarets of gold beyond the narrow confines of a grinding existence. Chance plays havoc with the far horizons. The hills may bind so that there is only one escape, — through death. O'Neill becomes so immersed in the fog of temperamental blackness that it is difficult to see his goal at times. A looseness of structure, to which he is wedded, does not help to clear matters. There is no surety that, in the struggles he represents, he always sees the soul which he truly attempts to prove is the only worthwhile starting point. His violences of external action, which are as pronounced as the melodramatic overemphasis of the "old" theatre, are often confused, often wrong in distracting the observer from the real purport of the play. I found myself sidetracked in sympathy for the young couple in "Desire Under the Elms" the moment the mother strangled her baby in order to prove that her love for the boy was "beyond the dreams of revenge." O'Neill is as ruthless in his art as he is about human life. He has no quality of yielding; he does not see fully, but narrowly and intensely. This intensity often gets his scene across, but leaves it full of holes on closer study.

O'Neill's most successful attempts have been "The Emperor Jones" and "The Hairy Ape", yet in the latter one sees him

incapable of dealing with character outside the sphere of his early experience. The girl who gives the Ape his first shock that, in the scheme of things, he does not "belong", is a flaw that hurts. His pen thus far is limited; his interest thus far is insensible to the fine psychologies of an educated class. He can deal with the awful tragedies of injustice; he knows nothing, seemingly, of the softer qualities of justice. There stalk in the world a myriad evils; beauty there is, but his folk seem to be dumb before it. All the folks in "Desire Under the Elms" have a brute quality before the graces of life. This may be due to the very conditions against which O'Neill fulminates, but there is no spiritual hint that beauty is the ultimate goal. I believe that such lack is due to a lack of technical surety which makes O'Neill other than he intends to be and strives to be. He does not wish to be direct, but his situations are almost mathematically built up; he does not wish his people to speak with their mouths but with their souls. Yet here is how he impresses Hofmannsthal:

The characters in Mr. O'Neill's plays seem to me a little too direct: they utter the precise words demanded of them by the logic of the situation; they seem to stand rooted in the situation where for the time being they happen to be placed; they are not sufficiently drenched in the atmosphere of their own individual past. Paradoxically, Mr. O'Neill's characters are not sufficiently fixed in the present because they are not sufficiently fixed in the past. Much of what they say seems too openly and frankly sincere, and consequently lacking in the element of wonder or surprise: for the ultimate sincerity that comes from the lips of man is always surprising. Their silence, too, does not always convince me; often it falls short of eloquence, and the way in which the characters go from one theme to another and return to the central theme is lacking in that seemingly inevitable abandon that creates vitality. Besides, they are too prodigal with their shouting and cursing, and the result is that they leave me a little cold towards the other things they have to say.

O'Neill is not a pleasant accidental; rather is he a new starting point in the history of the American Drama. One cannot

consider him from the old angle. He is not as frankly experimental as Elmer Rice in "The Adding Machine", or as John Howard Lawson in "Processional", but his work is more persistently identified with his own personality. For a while this is interesting, but it sooner or later gets on one's nerves; sincerity becomes almost a mannerism, rebellion becomes calculated. All of his effects have a set method of approach; certain phrases are so often used that they begin to lose their meaning; they become easy symbols of identification. They take the place of reasoning, of justified position. In his pain there is power, but it beats upon hurt ears rather than willing ears, — it rasps. The nobility of life occupies secondary place in his calculations. His irony is scattered, except possibly in "The Hairy Ape": there it reaches a telling conclusion, where the brute man is bandied about by the brute world and the brute animal, and meets death because he can find no justification for himself with either. "Desire Under the Elms" would have been much more effective if he had clearly analyzed his conclusions; he dealt almost lyrically with the love existent between the young wife and her stepson; there were supreme passages of fundamental passion shown in scenes that were poignant in their meaning and their happening. Relentless condition closed in upon them with a kind of semi-humorous exercise of outward justice. But was there a positive meaning to the tragic wreck of the young lives? Hard character went marching on, and plain murder went murkily justified, to prove a love which was not fine frenzy but suppressed passion of a wild kind, stronger than hate, yet tainted with it. What would have been the effect on the play had O'Neill brought into the girl's make-up a suggestion of insanity? How would the play have developed if the girl had killed old *Cabot* — an act much more likely to gain the sympathy of an audience than what she did do?

One has to take O'Neill seriously because he does nothing that is not sincerely dealt with. But the time has arrived when one expects a deepening of his vision. He has not gone far beyond the horizon of his first stage. What his second stage of development will be is where we leave him now,

hoping that he will escape his relentless view of humanity as something debased, as in the Dark Ages, as devoid of noble instincts, as in the clay cloying to be free. His social philosophy is still in a state of being born.

IV

O'Neill broke upon the regular theatre world with his "Beyond the Horizon." It was produced by John Williams, and won the Pulitzer Prize for 1920. "Anna Christie" won the same prize for 1922. No American dramatist has been more discussed, more closely watched from season to season. He has been involved in controversies centering around censorship; definitive editions of his plays have been issued; and a great value is placed upon O'Neill first editions in the book world. This is an unusual turn of affairs in the theatre. Heretofore, a successful play has never meant so much as the bare announcement of a new O'Neill play means to-day. We are expectant, because we know that there is no hit-or-miss method about his attack. None of his contemporaries have created the interest he has.

Yet there are other dramatists who have added to play writing in America. Some years ago, Elmer Rice startled the critics by constructing a drama, "On Trial", in which he attempted, with success, a technical stunt; the development of a story backward, by means of moving-picture methods. Then he wrote several conventionally imitative plays under the influence of the German school. Thus far, however, his most distinctive work has been in "The Adding Machine", a psychoanalytical play, done in the expressionistic style, wherein he registers a poignant criticism against the machine civilization of the times. He warns against the conquest of devolution. Though he denied publicly that, in shaping this play, he gave thought to "Liliom", "R. U. R.", "Masse Mensch", or "The Hairy Ape", and asserted that his content and form were indissolubly wedded, evinced — so he claims — by the fact that it took exactly seventeen days to write the play, still it will be safe to infer that "The Adding Machine" belongs to

that stream of expressionism wherein we also group John Howard Lawson's "Processional", and Kaufman and Connelly's "Beggar on Horseback"; they are adaptations of a foreign model. In all of these expressionistic plays, there are currents or forces which move with the relentlessness of Greek Fate. Stark Young hints of "Processional" that its pathos "comes from the sight of this quivering and confused young life in the midst of forces whose power he must feel but whose counsels he can only faintly share or understand." So, in "The Adding Machine", "Processional", "Beggar on Horseback", and those foreign plays which are in the new style, there is a pattern beneath the literal thing which is the very life and meaning of the drama. Lawson, in "Processional", has done much to show that the expressionistic style may be set to American rhythms. He has done it crudely, for it is a pioneer effort in jazz drama, which has ample illustration of its truth daily in our newspapers. Here is drama which concentrates irony on condition, with an effectiveness quite as strong as any realistic treatment of social ailments. Repressive and expressive forces are suggested in a series of scenes which are states of mind rather than sordid actualities. The meanness of a room somehow finds itself denuded of particular furniture but becomes representative of narrowness of mind and meanness of soul. There is something akin to allegory in all this. There is something scientific about it also; drama takes on a quality of diagnosis: it is feverish, restless, oftentimes morbid, always unusual and strange.

In this respect expressionism errs quite as much as realism which, in the theatre, seems for the nonce to have fallen upon days of distrust and suspicion. It detracts the attention just as much as detail for which Mr. Belasco is despised: it is just as confusing, just as cluttering. It offers one the opportunity of being kaleidoscopic, and that means a looseness of structure and a looseness of thinking that are covered up by novelty, until one subjects the play to closer analysis. Then one sees how uncertain the form in its present practice.

Lawson naïvely states his purpose in writing "Processional." He says:

I have tried to approach the procession of American life from the point of view of a strictly native idiom. During the past five years the theatre has opened many new doors. New York has discovered Europe. And the native play has plowed fresh fields. But this has been only a beginning, rich in expectation but poor in achievement. The American playwright must create his own structure and his own language. He cannot borrow expressionism from Germany any more than he can shut himself up in one of Pinero's drawing-rooms. He must find the rhythm of his own age. In a sense, perhaps, this is a jazz rhythm. At least jazz gives a superficial impression of the mechanistic unrest of the period. But the inner meaning of jazz is as hard to find as the inner meaning of a locomotive or a political campaign. It seems to me that any play worth its salt must find inner human values in this pulse of the times.

The various conflicting ideas as to the elements which make for expressionism would indicate that the form is not yet satisfactorily evolved. It remains to be seen whether it is destined to be more than a means of escape from hardened forms of realism, or whether it is in itself a form worth preserving. We had from Theodore Dreiser, in his "Plays of the Natural and the Supernatural", a series of experiments which were known to us before the Theatre Guild made theatre audiences familiar with "Liliom" and "R. U. R." Dreiser is the forerunner of a metaphysical school which delights in expressionism. His book was issued in 1916. In a sense he harkened back to Poe; in another sense he led the way to one of the roads we now travel.

V

I cannot take these examples as anything more than isolated attempts to break from the realistic way in which, through our newspaper experience, we have become accustomed to see things. Charles Kean, Henry Irving, and Beerbohm Tree accustomed the spectator to a mass of archæology which buried the play and lost its mood. The new scenic artist rediscovered possibilities of poetic drama. In our plays of the past we did not probe far beneath the surface; we had

inherited prejudices and fears to cope with: truth scorched where it should have enlightened. We have been educated away from these dodgings since the days when Ibsen first shocked us. Still within the ken of many of us are the sentimental palliatives we were treated to in our plays, and are still treated to. For we are not completely out of the woods yet.

But we are primed for refreshing irony, and hail it with gusto. The flair of George Kaufman and Marc Connelly in "Dulcy" and "To the Ladies" has almost a Gilbertian value to it. They could give us an American libretto as fresh as "Patience" and "The Mikado." They are of the tradition George Ade and Mr. Dooley started, which the columnists have maintained in the press. Facing the facts good-naturedly seems to be the chief claim of these writers. F. P. A. conceived the bromidic Dulcy in his daily New York *Tribune* "stunt", and he had fun with an American quality which no serious critic could have got away with in such happy fashion. One can strike deep by such a method. The exquisite variety of that irony may spread over a large area, as George Kelly spread it in "The Torch Bearers" or else concentrate on one character representative of a national weakness, as in "The Show-Off." Mr. Kelly far exceeds Miss Rachel Crothers in the handling of such a method. The latter's "Expressing Willie" skims the surface of a great American tragedy of successful incompetence. *Aubrey Piper*, in "The Show-Off", is more subtle, though no less innocuous than *Willie*. Between *Willie* and *Aubrey* is to be found a change that has befallen the American Drama.

Can it be said that the American Drama has any peculiar symptoms of its own? Are we still predominantly beholden to the foreign theatre, as we were in the past? Our survey of American Drama has suggested that we have largely excelled in what Mr. Gilbert Seldes calls our "seven lively arts." The Yankee type still persists, though there is a sea of difference between *Solon Shingle* and *Ethan Frome*. What is the art of Al Jolson but the art of the minstrel? The business and legal types of the present are still related to the *Judge Bardwell Slote* and *Colonel Mulberry Sellers* of old. Strange to say,

politics have ceased to play any part in our drama, since Charles Hoyt and Edward Harrigan put them into a burlesque atmosphere. "Processional" has a subtle echo of the *Mulligan* series. The low type here used is reminiscent of the outlook of Harrigan. It is much nearer life than Sheldon's conception of it in "Salvation Nell." O'Neill's "All God's Chillun Got Wings" is an intellectualized Harrigan. If the truth must be told, Hoyt and Harrigan had those very jazz rhythms which Lawson believes are characteristic of American life. But they wrote plays in a period when incongruity was acceptable, and technique was not much considered.

Our folk sense in the theatre, as seen in such plays as Lulu Vollmer's "Sun-Up", "The Shame Woman", and "The Dunce Boy", in MacKaye's "This Fine-Pretty World", and Hatcher Hughes's "Hell-Bent for Heaven" and "Ruint", is being consciously developed. Our historical sense seems to be dormant; it was John Drinkwater who gave us a Lincoln play and a Lee chronicle, far different, far more effective than Howard's "Shenandoah" or Fitch's "Barbara Frietchie."

Our life is not sufficiently homogeneous for us to develop a high sense of comedy, or rather a sense of high comedy. Most of our social plays are lacking in manner, are — what one critic facetiously called them — comedies of bad manners. But, in comparison with the immediate past, our comedy has emerged from an era of noise to an era of wit and clear seeing. It has a vernacular of its own, but so had the plays of George Ade.

There is no reason to doubt that our American Drama is vastly better than it used to be. We cannot dismiss as trifling such pieces as "Clarence", "The First Year", "Ambush." "Dulcy" is not a flip creation. But we have fallen down in the story quality of our plays. We are still woefully lacking in idea, still woefully lacking in clear thinking — I would suggest Jevons' Logic as a text-book in our play writing courses — we are wanting in our ability to "follow through." We still write cleverly much that is not worth writing about. And, in the average of what we get in a dramatic season, there is much that is scrapped. We are wasteful of our talents.

It seems almost as though we did not think anything worth while unless it was based on a European model. The drama is still regarded by our thinking author as a plaything, something to amuse the public with, lightly and cleverly. Our literary workers still turn to the theatre as a sort of outlet for a trick, a sleight of hand. Yet, when they fail, they blame the theatre, rather than examine their own handling of an instrument which they do not yet realize is delicate and more difficult than any other form of literary expression. It is more than a stunt when a substantial success is met with in the theatre. By some luck of the gods they have created well; there is no reason why they should not create well again if they have thorough knowledge of their medium, and if they have something to say. Until this is realized, we will have to take our blue prints from Germany: we will have to write dramas which run until they are worn out, when, like the Ingersoll watch, it is cheaper to get a new supply. We are clever in our comedies, we are swiftly active in our farces, we still cling to the old melodrama, the old romance, the old play of "big moment." While we have every reason to be thankful that new vistas are offered the American dramatist, we have still much work to be done.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Roster

We break off abruptly in our narrative, because a development is continuous, and must be added to to-morrow. For each generation of actor and playwright has individual problems to consider, some of them dependent on what has gone before, others so far away from what custom looks for that a story about them alone is advisable. There has been no attempt in this survey to be inclusive, — to indicate all the playwrights, to discuss all their works, to mark all their productions. What I have endeavored to do is to place before the reader those high lights in a development which is picturesque on its social side and rather disillusionizing on its art side.

We must be honest with ourselves. Our playwrights from early times have worked very close to the theatre and the actor. Their dramas have been like impromptus on the flute; played for all they were worth, and changed by the player from night to night, as the mood prompted. Unfortunate that some of these plays were ever hastened into print, as evidence of our literary poverty. But fortunate indeed for the student, who regards them as evidence for social study.

There are writers that I have left unmentioned, who have been doing work of credit to themselves and certainly of great profit. But to detail them would be merely to catalogue them, and that is unprofitable as study and deadly to read. I elected to discuss the *American Dramatist* — out of the welter of materials to give some general impressions of what he

has tried to do, what he has had to contend with, how he has conquered. There are infinite angles from which to view him: there are still fields to be opened up. I have here and there hinted what there was still to do.

One of the most profitable theses a student could select would be a consideration of the American play abroad. From very earliest days it was the custom for the London theatre to produce American Drama: the changes necessary for its acceptance, the characteristics emphasized by the British press as distinctively "Yankee", these matters of Anglo-Saxon interchange have to be fully traced. There have been American dramatists who have had to go abroad to make a success before being accepted in their own land. There have been others who have made great strides on the Continental stage, which fact has utterly escaped the home folks and the home critics. It is only when one surveys the field of American Drama intensively that there is brought in upon one the enormous amount of vital material that has been allowed to lie fallow, and is only now being stirred. But I believe that the American Drama is something that has to be studied individually. It is difficult to narrate plots for others, to detail characters too specifically, because the majority of plots and characters are really not worth while remembering. From 1870, this condition changes, because, from that date, the literary sense, the speaking value of dialogue, the consistent development of plot began to be considered. The American Drama to-day has an art quality about it which was largely absent in the plays before 1870. With the advent of Eugene O'Neill and the men of his generation, we face dramatists with a real technical equipment, a real spirit of freedom, and a consciousness of the need of a body of ideas. We have taken from Europe for many a year; our theatre is still taking from Europe. But somehow the eyes of the dramatic world are upon us. The obstacles against which we have heretofore fought are mostly removed. We are being watched in this year 1925. Nineteen twenty-six may necessitate an added chapter of surprises and accomplishments.

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Nice People (1921). Rachel Crothers.
The Detour (1921). Owen Davis.
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A LIST OF MODERN AMERICAN PLAYS

This list does not pretend to be complete. It is merely given that the student may, at a glance, see who are some of the outstanding workers in the American Theatre. The dates of production, in most instances, are supplied, so that an idea may be had of the contemporaneous activity of the dramatists. Most of these plays have been published, and are available for reading purposes. Unless otherwise stated, the theatres mentioned are in New York. In the tables, throughout the book, certain important plays by individual dramatists have been emphasized. They are not here repeated.

Ade, George. The College Widow. Samuel French.
The County Chairman. Samuel French.
Father and the Boys. Samuel French.
Just Out of College. Samuel French.
One-Act Plays: Nettie, The Mayor and the Manicure, Marse Covington, Speaking to Father. Baker.
Akin, Zoë. Declassé. Empire Theatre, October 6, 1919.
Aldrich, Thomas Bailey. Judith of Bethulia. Houghton Mifflin Co.
Anspacher, Louis K. The Unchastened Woman. 39th St. Theatre, October 9, 1915.
Austin, Mary. The Arrow Maker. New Theatre, February 27, 1911.
Bacon, Frank, and Winchell Smith. Lightnin'. Gaiety Theatre, August 26, 1918.
Barry, Philip. You and I. Belmont Theatre, February 19, 1923.
Bateman, Mrs. H. L. Self. Burton's Chamber's Street Theatre, October 26, 1856.
Beach, Lewis. The Goose Hangs High. Bijou Theatre, January 29, 1924.
A Square Peg. Punch and Judy Theatre, January 27, 1923.
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